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WEIRD

August 1971 50¢

IN THIS ISSUE:

THE INCREDIBLE TERROR OF
VAMPIRE FLIES

THE GRUESOME SHOCK OF
THE BEAST

PLUS
OTHER TALES OF
SHOCK • TERROR • SUSPENSE

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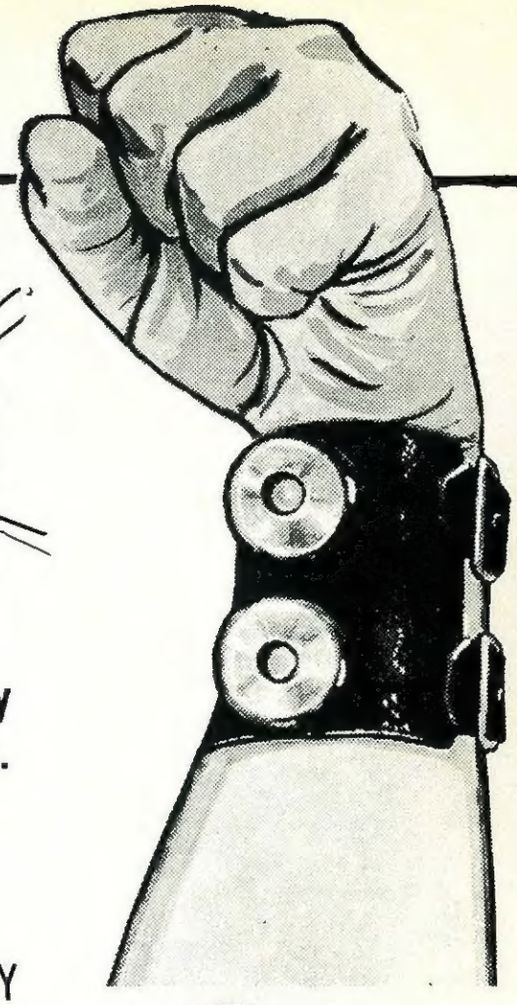

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EZRA JACKSON, Art Editor

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THE BEAST

HOW PRECIOUS IS LIFE ? IT WAS **VERY** PRECIOUS TO HARLE FRIER -- SO PRECIOUS, THAT WHEN HE AND FOUR COMPANIONS WERE SHIPWRECKED AND CAST UPON AN ISLAND WHOSE ONLY INHABITANT WAS A STRANGE, WILD HALF-HUMAN BEAST, ONLY HARLE REMAINED, WHEN SEVERAL WEEKS LATER A CRUISING NAVEL SAW HIS BEACON FIRE...

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND HOW A BEAST LIKE THAT GOT ON THE ISLAND IN THE FIRST PLACE--OR HOW IT SURVIVED! IT WAS CHEWING ON THOSE BONES, AND THEY'RE HUMAN BONES!

HARLE COULD NOT TELL HIS RESCUERS THE STRANGE HORRIBLE SECRET THEY SHARED TOGETHER! HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT HIMSELF, BUT HE KNEW THAT THE BEAST EXERTED AN INFLUENCE OVER HIM, A SILENT POWER THAT HE MUST OBEY!
I FED THE THE BEAST FROM THE BOXES OF FOOD IN THE LIFE BOAT! WE SHARED IT, AND HE IS GRATEFUL! THESE BONES ALL AROUND--THEY MUST BE FROM MEN WHO WERE WRECKED HERE BEFORE!

I WAS A LUCKY MAN THAT YOU SAW MY FIRE WHEN YOU DID! OTHERWISE, I WOULD HAVE DIED, TOO!

HARLE FRIER-- YOU AND THE BEAST KILLED US--FED ON OUR FLESH TO TO KEEP LIFE IN YOUR OWN BODIES! THERE WERE NO BOXES OF FOOD IN THE LIFE BOAT! YOU LIED WHEN YOU SAID NONE OF US REACHED THE ISLAND WITH YOU!

NOW, HARLE FRIER, OUR CURSE IS UPON YOU, AS THE CURSE WAS UPON THE BEAST! WHEN YOU LEAVE SKELETON ISLAND, THE URGE TO DESTROY WILL DOMINATE YOU!

HARLE FRIER CLOSED HIS EARS TO THE ACCUSING VOICES!
I AM READY TO LEAVE WITH YOU! THE BEAST CAN REMAIN HERE--THIS IS HIS HOME!
YOU CAN JOIN US ON THE BOAT NOW!

LATER, ON BOARD THE BOAT, HARLE FELT LIKE A NEW MAN...
A BATH! CLEAN CLOTHES! A CHANCE TO LIVE AGAIN! IN A FEW DAYS I'LL BE BACK WITH MY WIFE AND FAMILY! THE ISLAND WILL BE LIKE A DREAM!

SUDDENLY, HARLE'S CABIN DOOR OPENED AND...
AH! I'M GLAD I FOUND YOU, HARLE!
WH-WHO...? WHAT...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME? NO--I SUPPOSE NOT! YOU NEVER SAW ME LIKE THIS BEFORE! TONIGHT I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND I COULD REVERT TO MY FORMER SHAPE! GETTING OFF SKELETON ISLAND CAUSED THE CHANGE! YOU SEE, I SWAM OUT TO THE SHIP AND SNEAKED ABOARD!

DON'T RUN FROM ME, HARLE! I WAS YOUR WEREWOLF COMPANION ON THE ISLAND!
NO! NO! SUCH THINGS CAN'T BE! I-I'M LOSING MY MIND!

YOU HAVE NOT LOST YOUR MIND! ONLY YOUR SOUL-- JUST AS I DID-- BACK THERE ON SKELETON ISLAND!

MY NAME IS RUFUS MEEKS! LIKE YOU, I WAS SHIPWRECKED ON THE ISLAND WITH SEVERAL COMPANIONS! I KILLED THEM--ATE THEM-- TO KEEP LIFE IN MYSELF! THERE WERE OTHER SHIPWRECKS AND VICTIMS! THEY, TOO, HAD TO DIE, THAT I MIGHT SURVIVE!

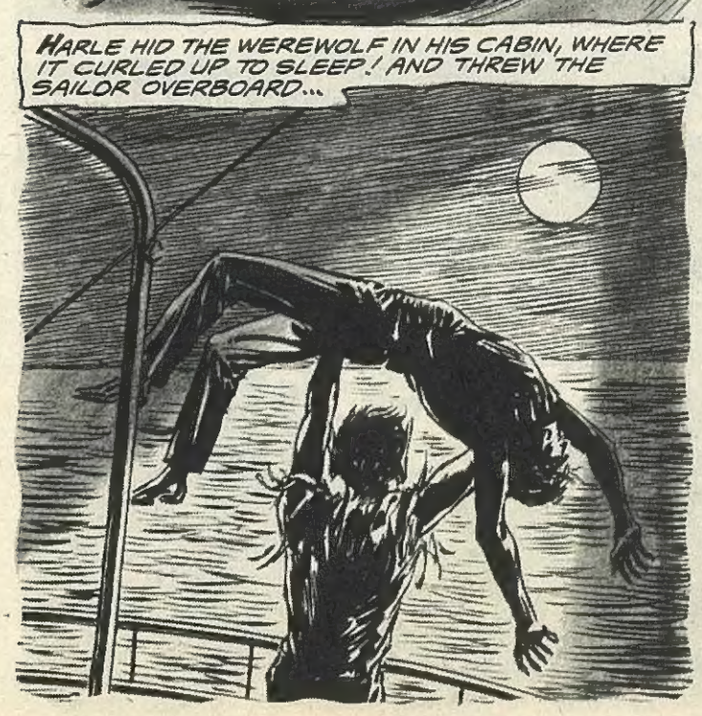
I HAD HEARD THE ISLAND WAS CURSED, BUT NOT UNTIL I FOUND MYSELF TURNING INTO A BEAST DID I BELIEVE IT! THEN YOU AND YOU FRIENDS CAME!

IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE COMPANY! AND AND I KNEW THAT THE CURSE OF THE ISLAND WOULD ACT ON YOU, AND YOU WOULD BECOME AS I WAS!
NO! NO! NEVER!
HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

AH! A VICTIM! I MUST SATISFY MY URGE TO DESTROY!

I-I AM CHANGING, HARLE! YOU WILL GRADUALLY BECOME AS I AM!

WHEN THE ATTACK WAS ENDED...
THIS IS DREADFUL--HORRIBLE! THE SAID I WILL BECOME AS HE IS, AT CERTAIN TIMES!


HARLE HID THE WEREWOLF IN HIS CABIN, WHERE IT CURLED UP TO SLEEP! AND THREW THE SAILOR OVERBOARD...

THE SAILOR WILL BE MISSED, BUT NO ONE WILL SUSPECT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! I'LL FIGHT THIS CURSE! IT WON'T HAPPEN TO ME! BUT-- WHAT IS THIS? MY-MY HANDS!

HARLE FRIER REACHED HIS OWN HOME! THE BEAST DISAPPEARED IN THE SHADOWS OF THE CITY...
OH, HARLE-- I'M THANKFUL, BUT I WISH YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WEAR THOSE GLOVES!
MY HANDS WERE POISONED BY SOMETHING ON THE ISLAND, AND TO UNCOVER THEM ISN'T SAFE! THEY MIGHT BECOME INFECTED!

ALL RIGHT, DARLING! I WON'T BOTHER YOU ABOUT THEM ANY MORE! I'M TOO HAPPY YOU'RE HERE!

AS HIS LIPS MET HIS WIFE'S, A STRANGE FEELING CAME OVER HARLE FRIER, A FEELING HE WAS POWERLESS TO THROW OFF!
HARLE! WH-WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU LOOK DIFFERENT! LIKE--LIKE A BEAST!
GRRRRR!

LET ME ALONE! I'LL FIGHT IT! GRRRR!
OH!

THE CURSE OF SKELETON ISLAND IS UPON YOU, HARLE! THE SIGN OF THE BEAST! HA! HA! HA!

MR. FRIER! EEYAAAAH!
GRRRRRRR-

WHEN HIS URGE TO KILL HAD BEEN APPEASED...
I'LL LOCK THE BODY IN HERE UNTIL I CAN THINK!

AS HE TURNED, HARLE SAW HIS REFLECTION IN THE HALL MIRROR...
NO! NO! I-I CAN'T HIDE THIS AS I MY HANDS! WHAT SHALL I DO?

SUDDENLY...
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
I FOLLOWED YOUR SCENT, MY COMPANION FROM SKELETON ISLAND! WE MUST GO HUNTING AGAIN, TOGETHER! BUT I SEE YOU'VE KILLED ALREADY!

YES-- HERE IN THIS CLOSET!
MAMA! LOOK! DADDY IS WEARING A FUNNY FACE, AND SO IS THE FUNNY MAN!

A YOUNG, TENDER VICTIM! I MUST KILL! GRRRRR!
NO! NO!

GRRRRR!
HELP! HELP!

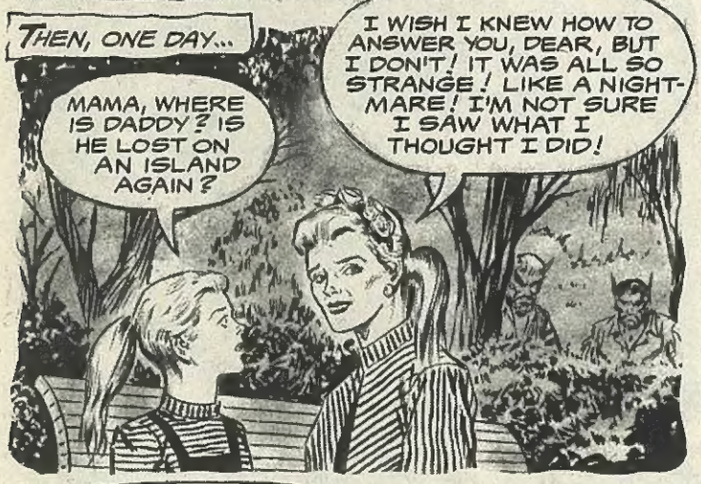
WE MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE! COME! WE WILL FIND OTHER VICTIMS!

BUT SURELY YOU WILL NOT HARM ME, YOUR COMPANION! WE ARE TWO OF A KIND, NOW, MY FRIEND! FROM NOW ON, WE WILL FEAST TOGETHER ALWAYS!

MOMENTS LATER...
AH! FLESH AND BLOOD AGAIN!
GRRRRR!

THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF AN ERA OF TERROR IN THE CITY!

A GENERAL ORDER WENT OUT TO SHOOT TO KILL, IF THE BEASTS WERE SPOTTED! BUT THEY WERE FIENDISHLY CLEVER, AND A TRAIL OF BODIES, BLOOD, AND BONES LAY BEHIND THEM...


THEN, ONE DAY...
MAMA, WHERE IS DADDY? IS HE LOST ON AN ISLAND AGAIN?
I WISH I KNEW HOW TO ANSWER YOU, DEAR, BUT I DON'T! IT WAS ALL SO STRANGE! LIKE A NIGHTMARE! I'M NOT SURE I SAW WHAT I THOUGHT I DID!

AS RUFUS SPRANG, HARLE SPRANG AFTER HIM, AND BEFORE HE COULD TOUCH THE CHILD, HE TORE SAVAGELY AT HIS THROAT!
HELP! HELP!
GRRRRRRR!

GOT 'EM BOTH! THEY'LL NEVER ATTACK ANYONE ELSE!
BLAM! BLAM!

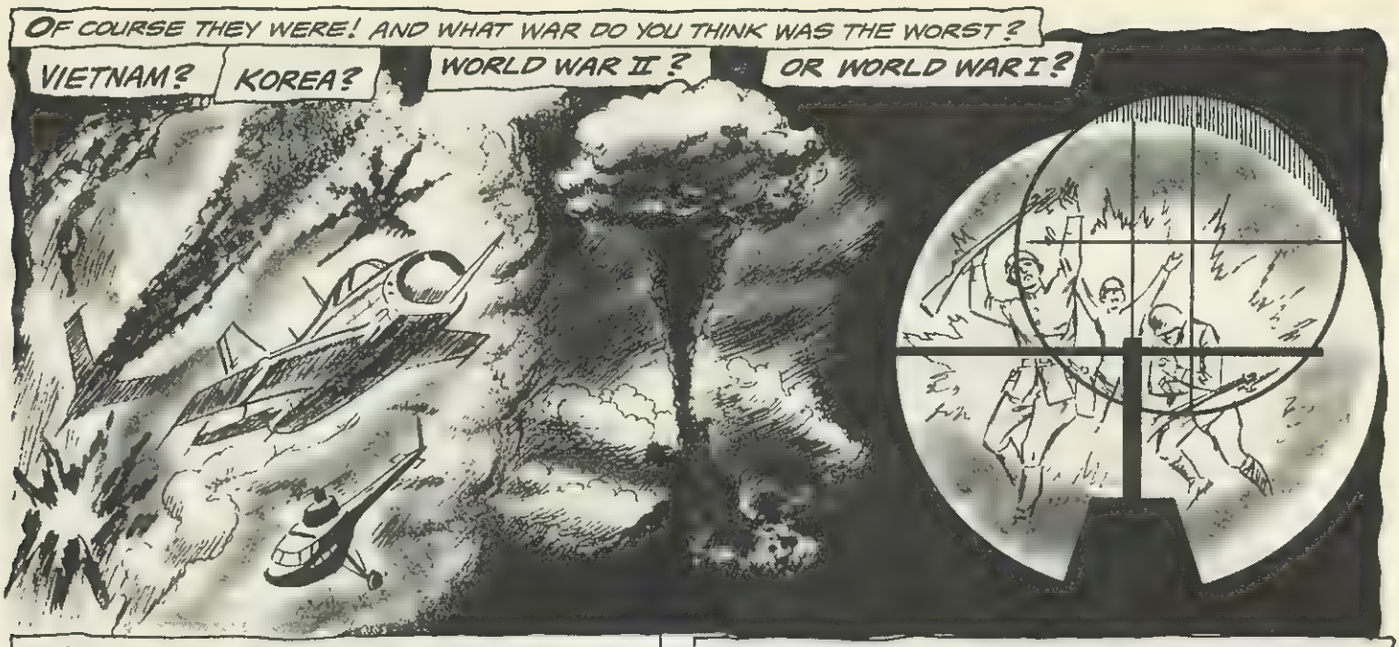
THE MYSTERY OF HARLE FRIER'S DISAPPEARANCE WAS NEVER SOLVED, AND HIS HORRIBLE SECRET DIED WITH HIM! THE BEASTS WHO HAD ONCE BEEN MEN WERE BURNED IN THE CITY REFUSE INCINERATOR, AND THE VENGEANCE OF THE DEAD OF SKELETON ISLAND WAS SATISFIED!
The End

THE VAMPIRE FLIES

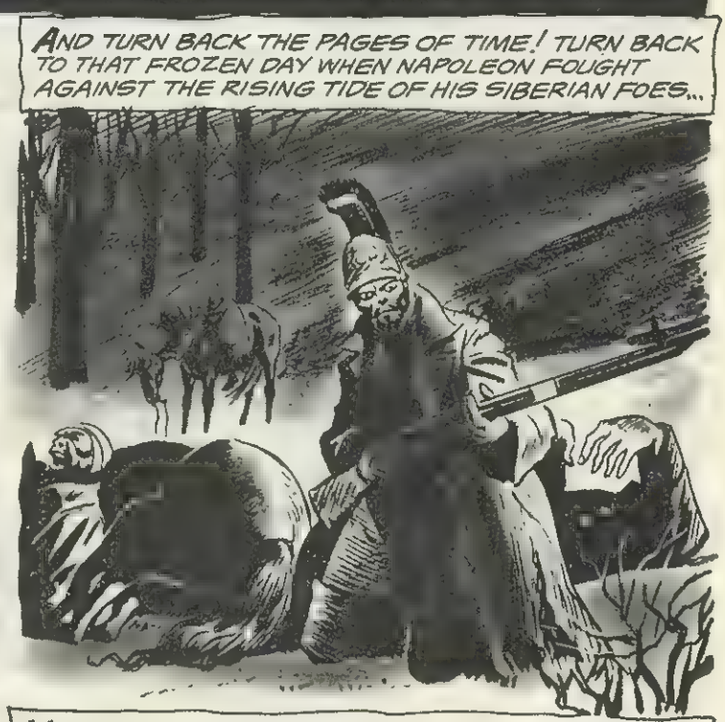
THE GREED FOR POWER CAN CREATE, DESTROY AND HORRIFY BUT BALUK KHAN, THE CONQUEROR THOUGHT NOTHING COULD WITHSTAND HIS MIGHT... THE ONLY THING HE FORGOT WAS THAT NO ONE COULD CONQUER...

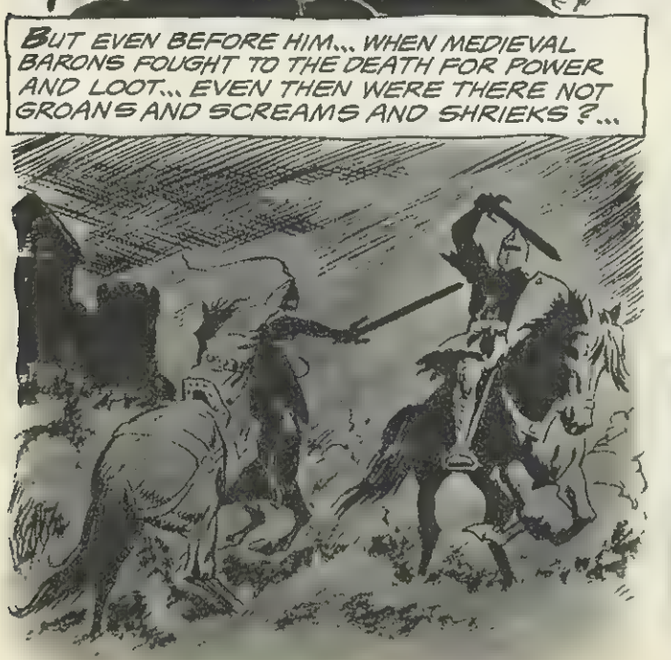
OSCAR FRAGA

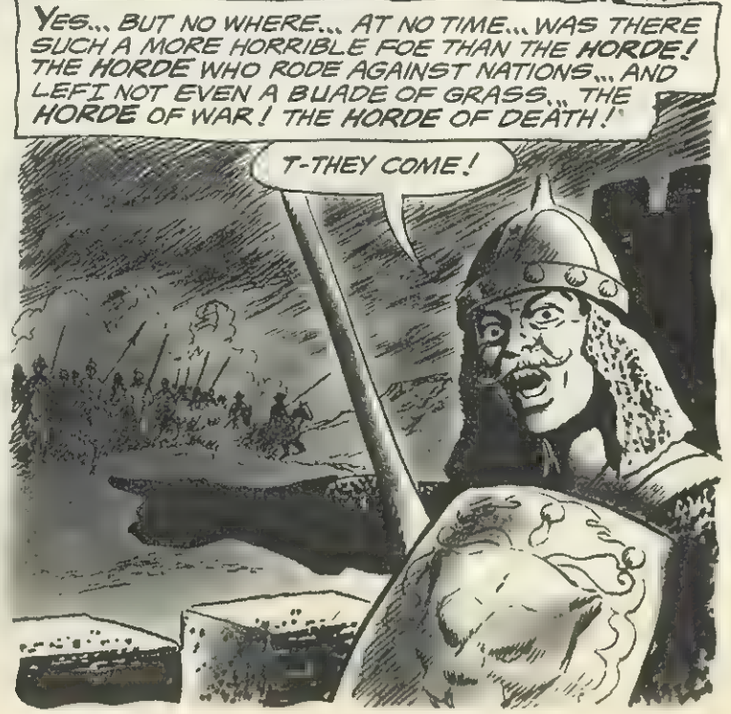
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A MURDERER'S FACE? NOTHING TERRIBLE ABOUT IT, IS THERE? THEY ARE MEN! AND THESE WERE MEN, TOO! BUT LOOK CLOSELY... ISN'T THERE SOMETHING ABOUT THEM? SOMETHING THAT SAYS THEY ARE KILLERS!


OF COURSE THEY WERE! AND WHAT WAR DO YOU THINK WAS THE WORST?
VIETNAM?
KOREA?
WORLD WAR II?
OR WORLD WAR I?

...OR WAS THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES THE MOST TERRIBLE? SURELY, MEN DIED, BLOOD WAS SPILLED, BODIES WERE MAIMED... TERROR WAS BORN...
LET'S GO, BOYS! GET THOSE REBS! GET 'EM!


AND TURN BACK THE PAGES OF TIME! TURN BACK TO THAT FROZEN DAY WHEN NAPOLEON FOUGHT AGAINST THE RISING TIDE OF HIS SIBERIAN FOES...


BUT EVEN BEFORE HIM... WHEN MEDIEVAL BARONS FOUGHT TO THE DEATH FOR POWER AND LOOT... EVEN THEN WERE THERE NOT GROANS AND SCREAMS AND SHRIEKS?...


YES... BUT NO WHERE... AT NO TIME... WAS THERE SUCH A MORE HORRIBLE FOE THAN THE HORDE! THE HORDE WHO RODE AGAINST NATIONS... AND LEFT NOT EVEN A BLADE OF GRASS... THE HORDE OF WAR! THE HORDE OF DEATH!
T-THEY COME!

DOWN THROUGH THE PLAINS OF MONGOLIA... RACING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS OF TURKESTAN AND THE FROZEN STEPPES OF BLACK CATHAY AND TIBET... SURMOUNTING THE MIGHTY WALLS OF BLACK CATHAY AND CHINA... THEY CAME... CUTTING, KILLING, TORTURING, BURNING, CRUSHING...

FLEE! WE CANNOT FIGHT THEM! FLEE... OR WE SHALL BE CUT DOWN!

TOO LATE! THEY ARE UPON US! HAVE MERCY! MERCY!

HA, HA... MORE SWINE TO AMUSE OURSELVES WITH! KILL! KILL!

KILL!

EEEE

EE

AND WHO WAS THEIR LEADER? WHO WAS THIS MIGHTY CONQUEROR ...THIS RUTHLESS MASTERMIND OF THE **HORDE!** A LITTLE-KNOWN NAME, DEAR READER! A NAME THAT WOULD SEND SHIVERS OF FEAR DOWN YOUR BACKS HAD YOU KNOWN HIM PERSONALLY! **BALUK KHAN,** THE DESTROYER! **BALUK KHAN,** THE RIGHT ARM OF **GENGHIS KHAN!**

LET NO STONE BE UNTURNED! KILL MEN, WOMAN, AND CHILDREN! FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THIS VILLAGE WILL NO LONGER EXIST! NAY, NOT EVEN ONE BLADE OF GRASS!

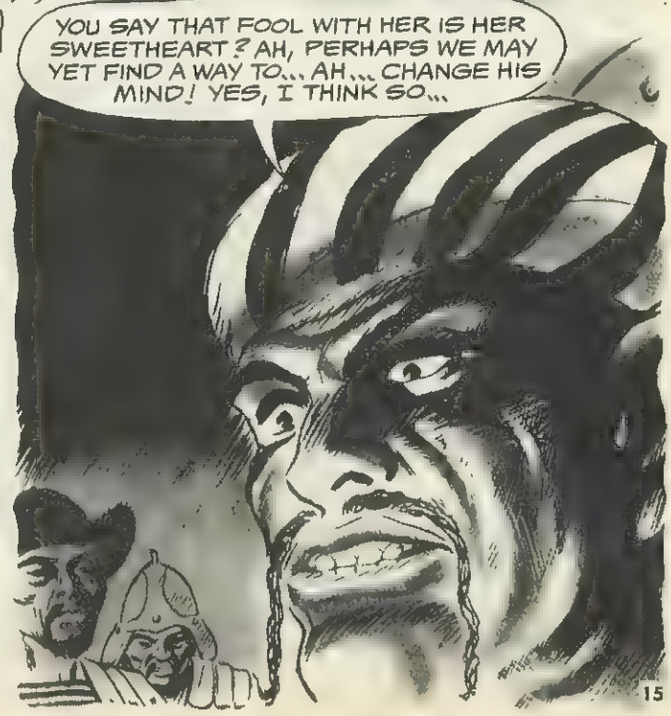
AND HE MURDERED, AND HE KILLED, AND HE TORTURED! AND THE RIVERS RAN RED WITH BLOOD...
THE TARTARS ARE VANQUISHED! THEIR LANDS, HERDS, POSSESSIONS, EVERYTHING! NOW IT'S MINE! MINE!
AND NOW... FOR THE PROVINCE OF UZRUK!
GOTH
UZRUK
PANNO
UZRUK... LAND OF THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE! A LAND RULED BY AN OLD MONARCH... A MAN NO MATCH FOR THE SAVAGE BARBARIANS TO COME...
WHY SO SAD FATHER? WHAT HAS RUINED THY HAPPINESS?
I FEAR FOR OUR LIVES, LARLA! YEA... FOR EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND BABE IN OUR FAIR LAND! BALUK APPROACHES OUR DOMAIN!
I HAVE HEARD OF HIS CRUELTY AND HIS HORDE! OUR SOLDIERS WILL BE NO MATCH FOR HIM! COULDN'T WE WIN HIM OVER BY KINDNESS AND BY FRIENDSHIP?
WE MIGHT USE BRIBERY, WHERE MIGHT CANNOT SUCCEED! HMMMMM...
HO, RENZOR... VARIAN... TOPAK! CALL OUR PEOPLE TOGETHER! WE MUST GIVE BALUKA A GIANT FEAST! MAKE PREPARATIONS AT ONCE! HURRY!
YES, OH LORD! WE SHALL DO SO WITH ALL HASTE!

AND SO A GIANT CELEBRATION WAS ARRANGED... IN HONOR OF THEIR "PROTECTOR" AND THEIR "FRIEND" THE MIGHTY BALUK KHAN...
MORE WINE! QUICKLY!
Y-YES GREAT CONQUERER!

BALUK LOVED TO EAT...
...FOOD! WHAT COULD BE BETTER? BRING MORE!

...AND BALUK LOVED WOMEN...
YOU ARE INDEED VERY BEAUTIFUL, MY LITTLE FLOWER!

BUT WHEN BALUK SAW LARLA, HIS HEART WAS LOST...
WHO IS THAT? I MUST KNOW! I MUST HAVE HER!
SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF THE UZRUK KING! AND THE MAN WITH HER IS HER BETHROTHED!


YOU SAY THAT FOOL WITH HER IS HER SWEETHEART? AH, PERHAPS WE MAY YET FIND A WAY TO... AH... CHANGE HIS MIND! YES, I THINK SO...

AND BALUK MEANT EVERY WORD HE SAID...
BUT WHERE DO YOU GO, BROTHER? ARE YOU NOT SATISFIED WITH THE FEAST IN YOUR HONOR?
WE CANNOT SIT IN THE CAMP OF THOSE WHO HAVE THE SCOURGE UPON THEM BEHOLD!

BUT YOUR COMING DID NOT GIVE US TIME TO...
DO NOT REPLY WITH EXCUSES! WE ARE LEAVING! THE VAMPIRE FLIES OF DEATH SHALL NOT TOUCH US!
GOOD! NOW I HAVE CREATED A BASIS FOR WAR!

A FEW WEEKS LATER, IN THE TENT OF LARLA'S BETROTHED...
ARRGHH!

AND SOON AFTERWARDS... DEATH FOR THE KING'S BODYGUARD BY MYSTERIOUS ASSAILANTS...
THIS IS FOR KHAN!

AND ONE MONTH AFTER THAT... AT THE VERY GATES OF THE UZRUK EMPIRE...
CRASH THROUGH THE PORTALS OF THE ENEMY! MY HORDE! SHOW THEM WHAT IT MEANS TO RESIST US!
ONWARD! OUR MIGHTY MASTER LEADS US!

NONE COULD ESCAPE...
UGH-H... AT LEAST... I SHALL NOT DIE... IN DISGRACE, LARLA! KILL YOURSELF, MY CHILD! TO LIVE WILL BE WORST THAN DEATH...
NO, FATHER! I SHALL LIVE LONG ENOUGH FOR REVENGE! HE SHALL NOT ESCAPE MY WRATH!

SO THE HORDE SWEPT THROUGH ANOTHER LAND ONCE MORE... RUTHLESSLY, INVINCIBLY... UNTIL THEY FACED A SILENT GIRL ON A SOMBER THRONE...
YOU AWAIT ME IN BRIDAL SPLENDOR, MY DOVE!

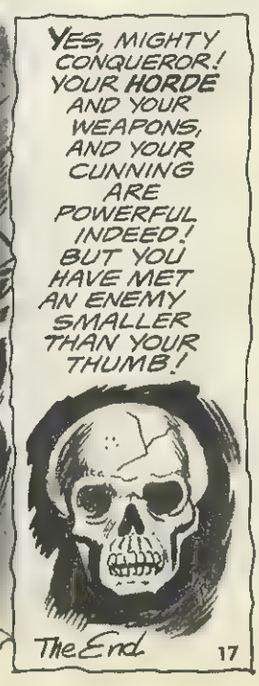
YOU WILL NOT SAY A WORD AGAINST ME, EH! I AM PLEASED! HERE IS MY KISS TO YOU, LARLA! MY LOVE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF!
HAIL TO OUR KHAN!

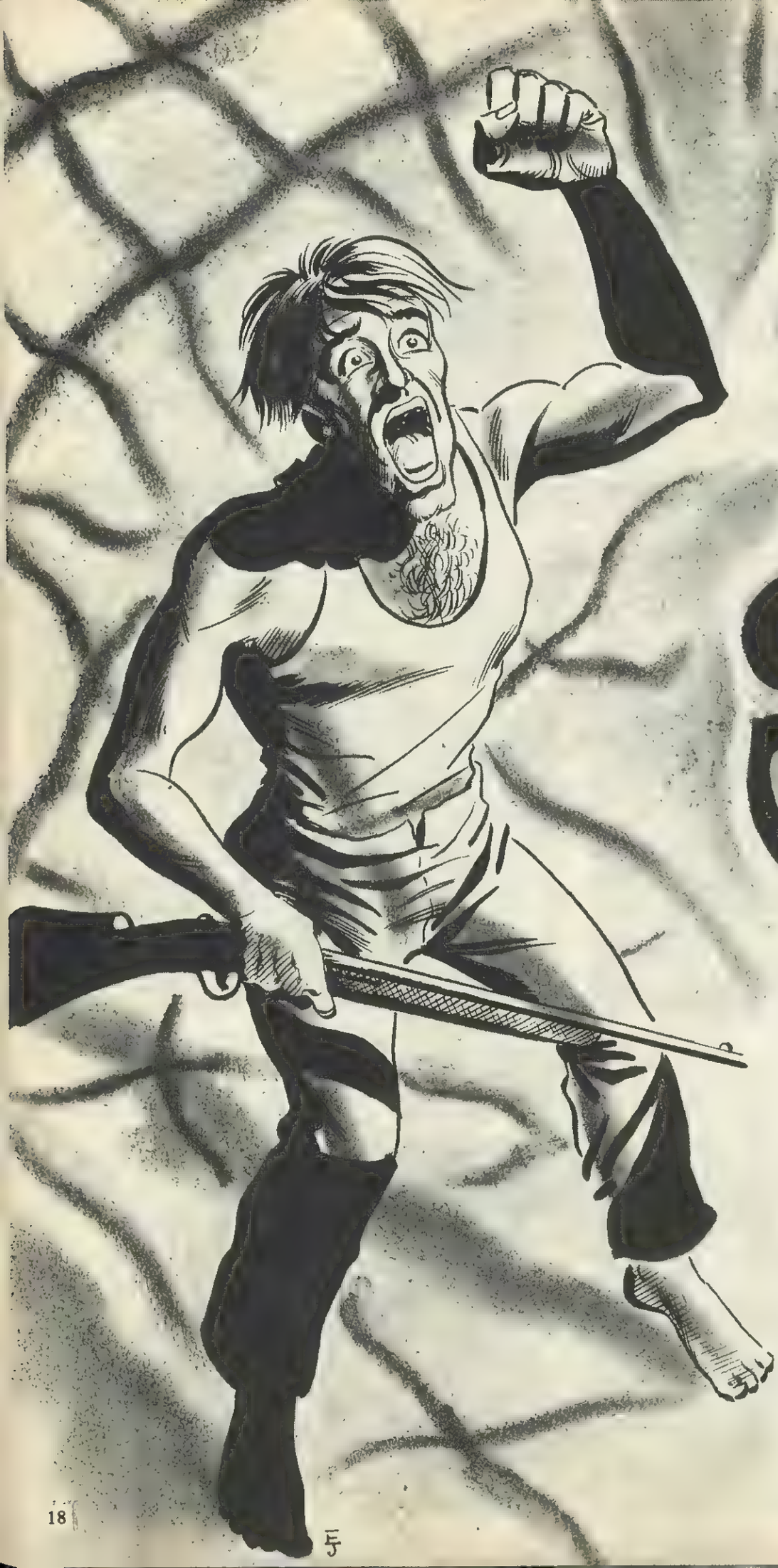
BEHOLD MY NEW BRIDE! MY VALIANT SOLDIERS! RAISE YOUR CRIES OF VICTORY TO HER!
BUT SHE APPEARS SILENT, MIGHTY ONE! IT IS A BAD OMEN! MAKE HER SPEAK!

BAH! I SHALL DO BETTER THAN THAT! I SHALL KISS HER AGAIN SO THAT SHE MAY KNOW THE POWER OF MY LOVE! SPEAK NOW, OH BELOVED! THY MASTER COMMANDS THEE!

WHAT? YOU DARE DISOBEY? SPEAK I SAID... OR I SHALL CUT OUT THY TONGUE WITH MY OWN DAGGER!

AIEEE!! THE VAMPIRE FLIES!


YES, MIGHTY CONQUEROR! YOUR HORDE AND YOUR WEAPONS, AND YOUR CUNNING ARE POWERFUL INDEED! BUT YOU HAVE MET AN ENEMY SMALLER THAN YOUR THUMB!
The End.



Spook Coffin

■ I awoke with a start. There was blackness all around except for the dull red glow of the camp fire, now almost smothered in white ash. The awful stillness of the veld and that impenetrable darkness told me that it was the hour before dawn. A dreadful hour, and one that always finds me unprepared.

What had awakened me? I lifted my head from my sleeping bag and saw the vague, shadowy forms of my companions stretched in a deathlike stupor in a circle about the smoldering fire. Above was an empty blackness that had extinguished the stars. And, about me, that awful stillness that emphasized the miles of wilderness.

Then, tearing the stillness, came that rumbling laugh, a laugh that began in the depths and cackled to hysterical heights. A black laugh.

It was that which had awakened me.

Again that laugh rose in its crescendo. I twisted my head in the direction of the camp fire round which were grouped our native "boys." A shadow moved. One of the natives was cackling horribly.

"For God's sake, stop that laughing!"

Maxwell, his fair hair all tousled, had leaped from his sleeping bag and was shrieking his command into the night. "Stop it, I say! Stop it!"

Dead silence followed. The laugh was lost in the stillness. One of the sleeping forms grunted uneasily. That was all.

But I was astounded at the appearance of Maxwell. Standing there in shirt and shorts, he was trembling like a man with a bad attack of malaria. He shook his fist into that empty blackness, and cursed. I half rose from my sleeping bag.

"What's the matter?"

His eyes glinted at me savagely. He did not speak, but walked to the camp fire, kicked some of the ash away, flung some logs into the embers, and then returned to his sleeping bag to sit upon it. He was still shaking as he sat there, all hunched up, as though expecting some terror would launch itself out of the darkness like a leaping leopard.

"That laugh!" he muttered. "You heard it?"

"Yes. One of the Kaffirs. Something funny came into his mind, I suppose. I wish it hadn't. There'll be no more sleep for me."

"Nor for me," groaned Maxwell.

"Man, you're shivering."

"I know. That laugh comes to me like a curse. A black laugh. Ugh!"

As one of the logs in the fire began to crackle and blaze I could see the tense look in the face of Maxwell.

"Well, if you're going to be upset by a laughing Kaffir," I began joculary, "the sooner you get out of Africa, the better. These Kaffirs are always laughing. They're happy, even though they are carrying the white man's burden."

But Maxwell refused to come out of his serious mood. He stared into the fitful blaze.

"Ever trekked in the Drakensberg district?" he asked suddenly.

I shook my head.

"I know it only vaguely," I replied. "Somewhere on the borders of Natal, eh?"

"That's it," said Maxwell eagerly. He obviously wanted to talk. Men do become communicative round a camp fire, and this hour before the dawn invited confidences.

"I used to know the country round there very well five years ago. Five years ago! I've never been back there since."

There was such intensity in the tone of his voice that I looked up quickly from the filling of my pipe.

"Why?" I asked. "A girl?"

He shook his head slowly.

"No. It was a laugh, a black laugh, that drove me out of the Drakensberg."

I think I must have chuckled.

"Really, Maxwell," I said, "are you serious?"

"Deadly serious."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I can't imagine—" I began.

"Have you ever seen that peculiar kind of kopje that slopes up like a gentle hill for about five hundred feet and then shoots up a straight wall of rock for another five hundred feet?"

"Of course," I nodded. "It's not really peculiar, that kind of kopje. You will find it in different parts of the veld. But I know the kind you mean — rather like a giant sarcophagus on a huge mound, eh?"

"A sarcophagus!" muttered Maxwell. "Yes, at sunset this looked like an enormous coffin. Horrible!"

"Had it a name?"

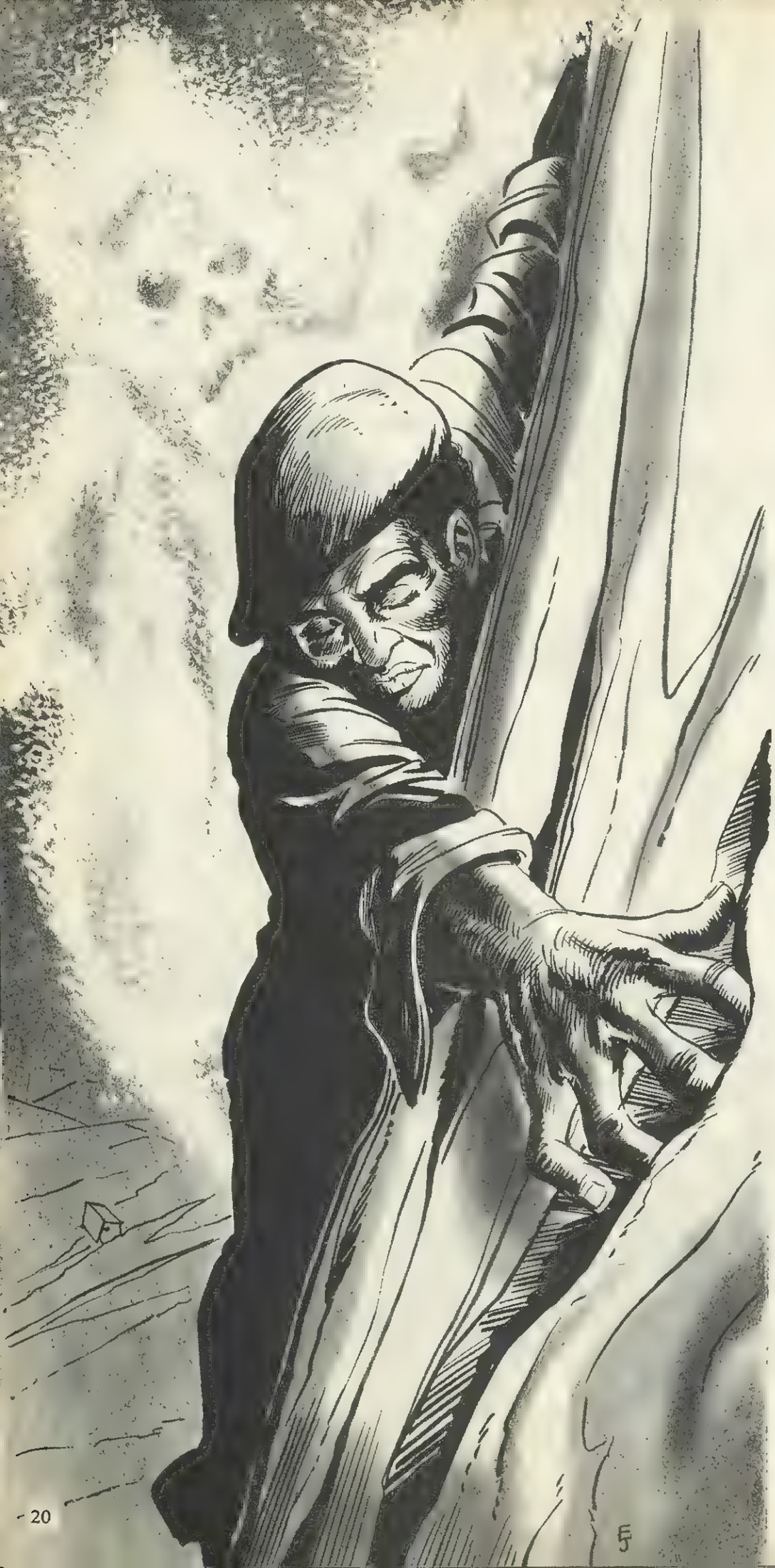
He turned his eyes towards me. They were lit up by the flicker of a flame. "It was called—Spook Kopje."

There was silence for a moment. The breathing of our companions in their sleeping bags sounded regular and sonorous.

"I was staying in a Boer homestead, not half a mile from that kopje," went on Maxwell, hesitantly. "I was doing nothing in particular—not even prospecting. I rather enjoyed the quietness, the humdrum life of the farm, the unbounded hospitality of the Boer family with whom I stayed. A real rest."

I nodded.

"A colored girl from the Cape, Olivia, looked after me. Brought the morning tea, prepared my meals, mended my socks, and so on. A good girl, and quite attractive. Something of a beauty for the neighborhood, and courted by all the black farm boys in the vicinity. But she looked down



upon them. 'Dis black trash not good enough for me,' she said decisively. And having said this she would go back to her pots and pans, humming an old missionary tune.

"She certainly seemed in no hurry to get herself a sweetheart. And a good thing, too, for the Boer, Oom Jannie, and his family. They depended more and more on Olivia. She was undoubtedly a household treasure. But when Johannes came into the district, she changed. Johannes was not the sort of man to let himself go unnoticed."

"And who was Johannes?" I asked, puffing away at my pipe, determined now that Maxwell had launched upon his story, that I would hear all the details.

"Johannes was a young colored man, also from the Cape," explained Maxwell. "He arrived in the Drakensberg district in a checked suit, a red beret, and a monocle stuck in his eye. He lived in Cape Town where he owned three hansom cabs that did a flourishing business after midnight. And he knew how to talk about himself and his hansom cabs, too. He had drifted to these parts for a holiday, apparently.

"He had not been in the district three hours before he discovered Olivia. And he began to court her. Needless to say, Olivia fell blindly for the red beret, the monocle, and the three hansom cabs. At the end of the second day she possessed the red beret. It seemed certain that before another week had passed she would possess the three hansom cabs as well. The black farm boys of the district hated this successful interloper."

I smiled at Maxwell, but his face still had that serious, intent expression.

"But although Olivia was practically conquered from the beginning, she still had a lurking feminine desire to see her cavalier of the red beret perform some doughty deed. Three hansom cabs were worth having, but Olivia also wanted a man. In her days at the Cape she had regularly visited the cinema, and her hero of the screen was Douglas Fairbanks."

"I should think it would be Valentino," I murmured.

"Not with Olivia. She adored the leaping antics of her hero, she thrilled when he flung himself to the top of a wall and crashed down again upon his pursuers. This was a man, and the sort of man that Olivia had decided to marry. Johannes was hardly that. Probably he had never climbed higher than the driver's seat of one of his own hansom cabs. But his talk was dizzying enough, and Olivia's mention of her hero encouraged his boastfulness. 'I can jump, I can swim, I can climb,' he announced to her. 'Why, each Sunday on Table Mountain I have climbed where even der Europeans will not go. *Allemagtig,* I—'

" 'Could you climb that?' asked Olivia carelessly. They were out on the veld, walking within a hundred yards of that sinister-looking kopje, Spook Kopje.

"Johannes gave it one glance, and laughed. 'Why, dat is nothing,' he said. 'I climb dat in half an hour. Now, on Table Mountain, I once climbed and—'

" 'You certain dat you could climb dat kopje?' persisted Olivia.

"Again Johannes laughed. He was so certain that he did not even turn his head to look at the kopje again. Instead, he gazed boldly into the soft brown eyes of Olivia.

" 'In half an hour,' he repeated.

"Olivia looked at him. 'No one has ever climbed dat kopje,' she said quietly. 'No one.'

" 'No?' Johannes was not disturbed. 'When I take you back to Cape Town, I—'

" 'Will you climb dat kopje for me?' asked Olivia, excitedly.

"Johannes looked at her, and then decided he had better look at this kopje again. He turned his head and regarded it. In the stark sunlight it looked forbidding enough — the gentle slope, and then the granite cliffs climbing straight for the blue silk of the sky.

" 'Of course, I will,' he said, carelessly. But he didn't mean it. Olivia did, however. She saw Johannes in a blaze of glory. She was quite right in her assertion that no one had ever climbed that kopje. In the memory of all in the district there had been only three attempts to climb Spook Kopje, and all had failed. One man had killed himself. Sheep had strayed up the slopes and failed to find their way back again. They had perished miserably from hunger. Since the last fatal attempt, Spook Kopje had beenleft severely alone.

" 'Climb dat kopje, and when you come down I marry you,' said Olivia. And she meant it.

"Again Johannes regarded the kopje. He was beginning to feel uncomfortable about the affair. But somewhere deep down in him, beneath the boastfulness, there was a strain that urged him to live up to the hero-worship of his sweetheart.

" 'All right, I do it,' he said.

" 'When?' persisted Olivia.

" 'When you like.'

" 'Tomorrow morning, at ten?'

" 'Yes.'

"And so it was settled. Olivia told me the gist of this conversation, excitedly, as she served me my supper. Here was a hero worthy of the films — and of Olivia. 'My man is some man,' she told me definitely. Oom Jannie shook his head over this folly. 'Aaach! Vhy do you want him to climb a kopje?' he asked testily. Olivia did not reply, but brought him his huge Bible that he read regularly each evening by candlelight."

Maxwell stopped talking. The night was still dark and soundless. He walked over to the fire and kicked another log into the blaze. Then he came back and sat on his sleeping bag again.

"Did Johannes climb the kopje?" I asked at last.

Maxwell nodded.

"Yes, he did. Incredible. But it took him more than half an hour. Five hours, in fact. One has to admire the achievement. The Lord knows how he did it. But there, in the late afternoon, we could see him on the top of that granite wall waving the red beret which Olivia had given him as a talisman. We grouped ourselves to watch him—Oom Jannie and his family, two neighboring farmers, three black farm hands, and myself. And among us strutted Olivia, proud of her hero, proud of his achievement, and not a little proud of herself. We waved back to the hero with the red beret."

Again silence.

"Well? Did they live happily ever after?" I asked.

Maxwell turned his brooding gaze upon me.

"Johannes never came back," he said briefly.

"But if he climbed to the top," I said, "surely he could—"

"He never came back," repeated Maxwell, monotonously. "Olivia waited for him, we all waited for

him to give him the welcome he deserved. But he did not come."

"But you could see him," I persisted.

Maxwell nodded.

"We watched that red blob of a beret trying to find a way down those granite cliffs for the rest of the afternoon. We watched until a saffron glow in the sky silhouetted Spook Kopje and made it once again a long black coffin. The glow changed swiftly into night, and still Johannes had not returned. Obviously, he had not found it as easy to descend as to climb. He may have missed his way or, what is more likely, lost his nerve. But he did not return that night although Olivia sat whimpering with a lighted candle, waiting for him until the dawn.

"In the early morning we watched the mist smoking away from the kopje. Again the granite cliffs were lit up by the stark sunlight. We searched anxiously. It was Oom Jannie, old as he was, who saw him first. He pointed a gnarled forefinger at the kopje.

" *'Daar is hij!'* he muttered.

"We followed his pointed finger. At last I saw him. The red blob of a beret. Johannes had clung to that throughout the night. He was still on the heights, still on the sinister summit of that kopje. But he had traversed the top from one end to the other. He was still seeking a route to descend.

"At this glimpse of him we shouted and waved. Olivia shrilled and screamed. 'My man, my hero!' she yelled. But the figure with the red beret took no notice. Not at first. But, as the sun climbed higher he saw us. He waved in reply; waved the red beret. But it was a tired gesture; the last *panache*. He was dispirited and anxious. For the rest of the time he held the red beret limply in his hand.

"Olivia completely abandoned her pots and pans. She stood in the doorway of the farmhouse, staring into the sunshine at that restless red blob on the kopje. We tried to comfort her with assurances. 'He'll be down for dinner, the young fool,' grunted Oom Jannie in her hearing. It helped her a little, that remark. But she refused to leave her post in the doorway.

"All through the afternoon, with my field glasses, I watched Johannes trailing desperately about the kopje. Yes, I could see he had become desperate. The owner of the three hansom cabs at the Cape had to get down or he would die of hunger and exposure. At first, I let Olivia watch him through the field glasses, but as the man became more and more desperate in his efforts to find a way down to earth I kept them to myself. Olivia began to weep. But she was not weeping, she was crooning those missionary hymns to herself. 'Lord, bring him back to me,' I heard her saying, over and over again. There was no use trying to comfort her, and, disheartened, I went inside.

"Late that afternoon, I went myself up the slopes of that cursed kopje in the hope that I might help Johannes in some way. I toiled with two farm boys to the food of those granite cliffs that went sheer into the sky. I marveled that the colored youth from the Cape had found a foothold of any kind. I traversed those cliffs from end to end, on each side of the kopje, but retired baffled again and again to the slopes. I tried three crevices, but each led to more sheer rock. I nearly broke my neck twice on that expedition. I returned in the darkness to the farmhouse and the weeping Olivia."

A log fell noisily into the fire. Sparks shot upwards to the black sky.

"How long did this last?" I asked.

Maxwell shivered again.

"I think it must have been the third night that Johannes went

crazy. I was awakened in the silence of the night by a horrible yelling laugh that resounded again and again across the empty veld. I never heard such a bloodcurdling laugh, coming from the depths and ending in a scream. A black laugh! The laugh that wakened me half an hour ago. Ghastly!"

Maxwell covered his face with his hands. It was some moments before he could continue.

"When I first heard that mad laugh I rushed out of the house on to the veld. Instinctively I looked towards Spook Kopje. Moonlight bathed it, so that the granite cliffs looked black and slimy. But there, on the top, was a prancing figure, a figure that laughed and yelled, and danced. It was Johannes. He was mad, and half naked, but still clinging to the red beret. I heard a stifled scream at my side. It was Olivia. She also had heard that black laugh, and realized at once the full horror of it all.

" 'My man! Johannes! I so sorry,' she whimpered, and then crumpled into a faint at my feet.

"Oom Jannie, too, looking like a stern ghost in his old nightshirt, had wandered out of the house.

" 'This is terrible . . . terrible!' he muttered. He stared at the kopje in the moonlight. 'Something must be done,' he muttered again.

"The next day five of us, all white men, made a desperate assault on the kopje. We tried again and again to scale those damnable cliffs, and again and again we failed. Baffled and dispirited we returned to the plains in the evening. And the mad, naked figure on the kopje kept up its yelling and screaming and dancing throughout. We all hoped that, mercifully, in this mad state Johannes would pitch down the cliffs and kill himself. But the man seemed to be possessed of an amazing amount of endurance. He lived, and kept up his black laughter throughout the night.

Of course, every farm in the vicinity was terrorized by that horrible laugh at night. It kept us all awake, and the women folk were hysterical. Olivia had not slept since Johannes climbed the kopje. We were all waiting for the poor devil to die, and he refused to die. The madness seemed to have given him a new lease of life.

"At last, Oom Jannie called the other farmers to a conference in the *eetkamer* of his farmhouse. I will not weary you with the discussion that took place there. But a terrible decision was made. We all emerged from the *eetkamer* with rifles under our arms. All except Oom Jannie. He carried a Prayer Book. Outside the door of the *eetkamer* crouched Olivia. She gazed at us dumbly. Her sad dark eyes traveled from our faces to the guns under our arms. At once she understood the terrible thing we were about to do. With a shriek she flung herself at the feet of Oom Jannie. He gazed down at her with a stern face, but tears were in his rheumy eyes. 'God's will be done,' he muttered, and gently thrust her aside.

"We all proceeded to the foot of that kopje with its mad, naked figure in a red beret still shrieking defiance of death and dancing hysterically on the edge of those granite cliffs. Slowly and deliberately we toiled up the slope, and at last we came to the sheer granite. Oom Jannie sat himself on a boulder. The others took up their positions. I sprawled on the ground and rested my cheek against the stock of my rifle.

" 'Sight. Three hundred yards,' I muttered mechanically to myself.

"The mad, prancing figure of Johannes was an easy mark. The red beret which still covered his head helped. I groped for cartridges in my pocket. I heard the 'click—click' as the others slipped the cartridges into the magazines of the rifles which were being trained on the mad, laughing man.

"Sitting on the boulder, Oom Jannie deliberately opened his Prayer Book. We had to wait while he adjusted his spectacles. He could never read without his spectacles. Then in a firm and reverent voice he began slowly to read burial service in Dutch.

" '*Daar het de almachtige God, de Heer van leven en dood, behaagd heeft de geest van onze ontslapen broeder te doen weder keren tot God. . . .*'

"You know how it goes in English: 'As it has pleased the almighty God, the Lord of living and dead, to let the spirit of our deceased brother return to God. . . .'

" 'Crack!' The first rifle had spoken.

" '. . . *die hem gegeven heeft, en die gesproken heeft . . .*' continued Oom Jannie deliberately.

" 'Crack! Crack!' Two more rifles spoke.

"The naked figure in the red beret continued to dance and shriek madly.

" '*Allemagtig!* My hand shakes,' cursed one Boer.

"I sighted on the red beret. "Crack!" I had missed.

" '. . . *stoft zyt gy, en tot zult gy wederken. . . .*'

" 'Crack! Crack!'

"And so it continued in the stark sunlight. We must each have fired five rounds before the end came. We saw the figure in the red beret stagger, and then pitch down.

" '. . . *bevonded moogt worden in vrede,*' concluded Oom Jannie softly, and closed the Prayer Book.

"Half an hour later we were back in the homestead."

A long silence followed. The camp fire blazed merrily. The sky was paling. Dawn had come. Maxwell sat hunched on his sleeping bag. Neither of us spoke for some time.

"And you never went back there again?" I asked.

Maxwell shook his head.

"Never. I left the next day."

"And Olivia?"

"I heard she went back to her pots and pans. She is now a silent, moody woman. She will never marry. Each evening she walks to that kopje and stares at the heights where lie the bones of the man she loved. And they do say," added Maxwell, "that a mad laugh is often heard coming from those strange heights of Spook Kopje. And that laugh portends evil."

I heard a deep chuckle behind me. Startled, I turned. The black face of my Kaffir servant grinned at me.

"Good morning, baas!" he said. "Coffee!"

The sleepers began to awake. ●

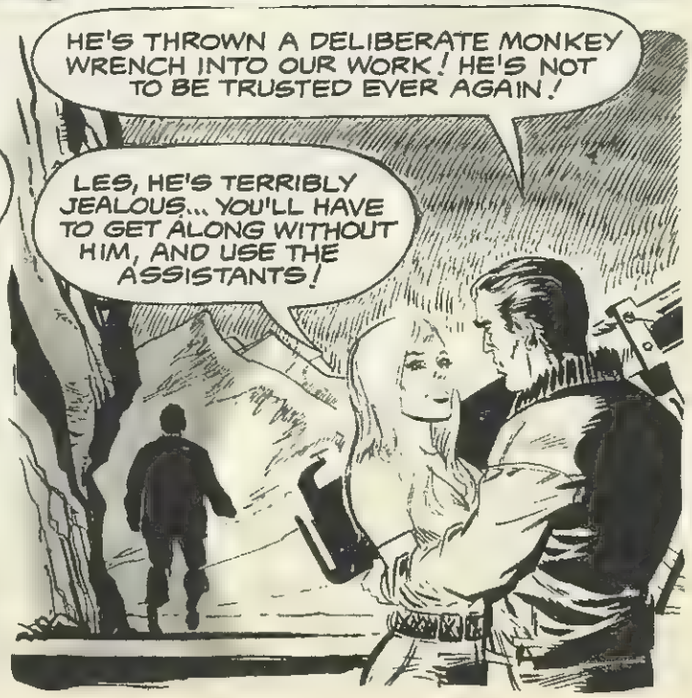
THE MUMMIES

INTO THE WILD HIGHLANDS OF MONGOLIA, TO RECORD A COMPLETE ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, STRUGGLED THE SMALL ASTRONOMICAL RESEARCH GROUP, NO ONE COULD'VE PREDICTED THE INCREDIBLE EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED! NAKED HORROR RIPPED THE EXPEDITION WHEN THE MUMMIFIED HORDE TORE OUT OF THE BLUE WITH DEATH AS THE PRIZE!

THIS IS NO WAY TO SET UP EQUIPMENT, OTTO! YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THE CENTER OF THE ECLIPSE WILL BE! WE'LL NEVER GET ANY RESULTS USING ANGLES!

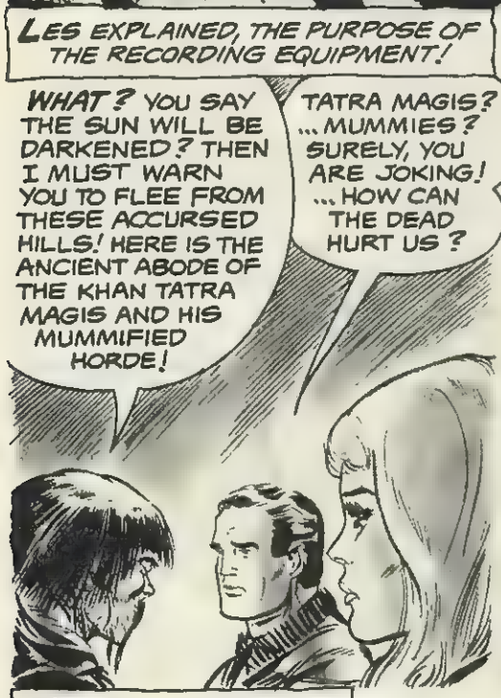
WHAT YOU ACCUSE ME, OTTO PREMER? I WHO HAVE RECORDED FOUR TOTAL ECLIPSES?

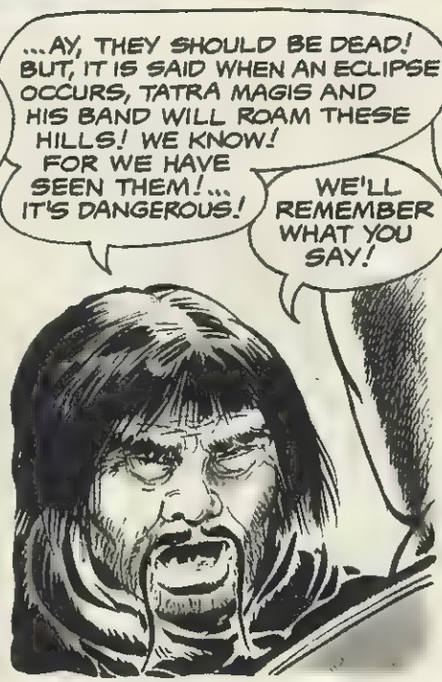
STOP QUARRELING! WHAT KIND OF SCIENTISTS DO YOU CALL YOURSELVES?



WHILE LES CORRECTED THE INSTRUMENT AND OTTO BROODED! A SHEEP HERDER AND HIS FLOCK APPROACHED...
I'LL MAKE HIM SORRY HE EVER HEADED THIS RESEARCH GROUP! ...WHAT'S THIS? A SHEPARD?

PLEASE DON'T ALLOW YOUR SHEEP TO STRAY NEAR THE INSTRUMENTS, THE MUST NOT BE JARRED!
STRANGERS, I AM KHARU, I'VE NEVER SEEN LITTLE DEVILS LIKE THESE MACHINES YOU HAVE! OF WHAT USE ARE THEY?


LES EXPLAINED, THE PURPOSE OF THE RECORDING EQUIPMENT!
WHAT? YOU SAY THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED? THEN I MUST WARN YOU TO FLEE FROM THESE ACCURSED HILLS! HERE IS THE ANCIENT ABODE OF THE KHAN TATRA MAGIS AND HIS MUMMIFIED HORDE!
TATRA MAGIS? ...MUMMIES? SURELY, YOU ARE JOKING! ...HOW CAN THE DEAD HURT US?


...AY, THEY SHOULD BE DEAD! BUT, IT IS SAID WHEN AN ECLIPSE OCCURS, TATRA MAGIS AND HIS BAND WILL ROAM THESE HILLS! WE KNOW! FOR WE HAVE SEEN THEM!... IT'S DANGEROUS!
WE'LL REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAY!

BUT NOW I MUST RETURN TO MY WORK! ...WE'LL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THE MUMMIES!
DO NOT TAKE MY WARNING LIGHTLY, ...GOODBYE!

THE ECLIPSE BEGINS...
HE WILL RETURN HOME SHOWERED WITH PRAISE AND FAME! AND I WILL HAVE BEEN JUST ANOTHER ASSISTANT! I MUST DESTROY HIM AND TAKE OVER! HA! THAT IS IF THE MUMMIES DON'T GET HIM FIRST!

SUDDENLY, THE HILLS ECHO WITH WEIRD SCREAMS OF AN ONRUSHING HORDE!
WH--WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT NOISE? OTTO, GET BACK! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?
LOOK AT YOUR LAST ECLIPSE, JARNELL I'M TAKING OVER WHEN YOU DIE ON THOSE ROCKS BELOW!
AHHREE! AHHEE!

NO! HELP! AIEEE!
NOBODY CAN HEAR YOU, WITH THE WILD SCREAMING GOING ON!
AHIRREEE! AHIREEEEE!

THEN, BETH APPEARED...
WHERE IS LES?
I DON'T KNOW! LOOK AT THOSE TERRIBLE CREATURES COMING THIS WAY!
HAIIREEE!

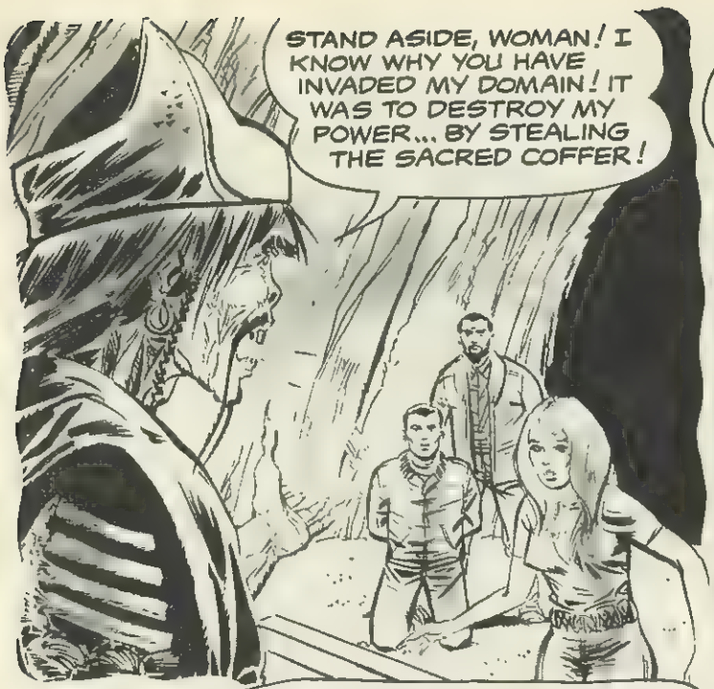
HAII! YOU DARE INVADE THE DOMAIN OF TATRA MAGIS? YOU ARE OUR PRISONERS!
LES! LES! HELP ME!

WITH ROUGH BRUTE STRENGH, BETH AND OTTO WERE SEIZED... BY A THING THAT LOOKED LIKE A MUMMY!
GREAT IS TATRA MAGIS! GREAT ARE THE MONGOL WARRIORS! HAIIREEE! WE RIDE FOR THE KHAN!
LET ME GO, YOU MONSTERS! LET ME GO!

THESE PASSAGES OF SOLID ROCK! I NEVER SAW THEM BEFORE! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?
TO THE COURT OF TATRA MAGIS, FROM WHICH THERE IS NO RETURN!

MAKE WAY! MAKE WAY! WE BRING PRISONERS FOR THE KHAN!

AS BETH WAS RELEASED A STRANGE SIGHT GREETED HER...
LES! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
BETH! I'D HOPED YOU HAD ESCAPED THESE MONGOL RAIDERS!

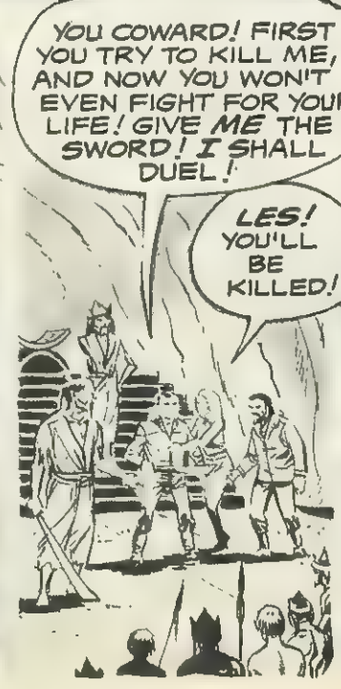

STAND ASIDE, WOMAN! I KNOW WHY YOU HAVE INVADED MY DOMAIN! IT WAS TO DESTROY MY POWER... BY STEALING THE SACRED COFFER!

WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THIS SACRED CHEST!
YOU LIE, CURSED DOG! GUARD, BRING FORTH THE COFFER AND SHOW THEM WHAT THEY WILL NEVER OBTAIN!

AN ARM! A WITHERED ARM!
YES! MY RIGHT ARM-- THE ARM I LOST BEFORE VIENNA! THIS ARM IS THE SOURCE OF MY POWER! WITHOUT IT, MY MUMMIES WOULD BE DOOMED TO EXTINCTION! LOOK YOUR LAST!

THIS IS, MY CHIEF SWORDMAN! ONE OF YOU MUST DUEL WITH HIM! IF YOU DEFEAT HIM, YOUR LIVES WILL BE SPARED AND YOU MAY DEPART! BUT THE WOMAN REMAINS HERE AS MY QUEEN!
HE'S MAD! HOW CAN WE FIGHT AGAINST THIS GIANT?

CHOOSE WEAKLINGS! THE SHORT STRAW WILL DUEL!
NO! I NEVER HELD A SWORD IN MY LIFE! I CAN'T!

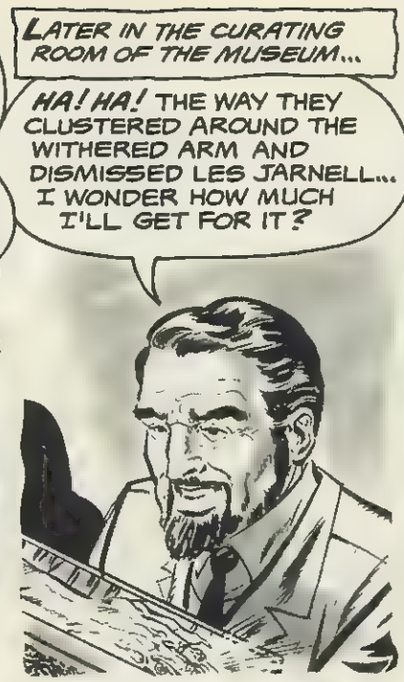

YOU COWARD! FIRST YOU TRY TO KILL ME, AND NOW YOU WON'T EVEN FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE! GIVE ME THE SWORD! I SHALL DUEL!
LES! YOU'LL BE KILLED!

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE, BETH! I WAS A GOOD SWORDSMAN AT THE UNIVERSITY! IT MAY HELP US ESCAPE!
I AM READY! STAND FORWARD AND FIGHT!

THE MONGOL SLASHES AT LES...
HAH, YOU GIVE GROUND WEAKLING!
I CAN'T OUTSLASH HIM! HOW DOES ONE FIGHT A LIVING MUMMY?
OWW! CURSE YOU! YOUR HEAD SHALL HANG ON MY SADDLE BELT!
HAA! THE STRANGER HAS DRAWN FIRST BLOOD! KILL HIM AKTAM! KILL! KILL!
LES'S MIND WHIRLS WITH A STRANGE THOUGHT... HOW CAN A MUMMY BLEED?
HAVE YOU SAID YOUR PRAYERS, WEAKLING?
IS THIS BEING LIVING OR DEAD! I MUST BE GOING MAD...
OOF!
CURSE YOU! YOU WILL PAY FOR THAT!
AAAIII! I'M UNDONE!
NOW GO JOIN YOUR ANCESTORS! ...THAT IS, IF YOU ARE A DEADMAN!
HE HAS SLAIN AKTAM! KILL HIM!
I COMMAND YOU TO STOP! TATRA MAGIS HAS MADE A PROMISE AND MY WORD IS SACRED! THE MEN MAY DEPART, BUT THE WOMAN REMAINS AS MY QUEEN!
BUT SHE IS MY WIFE! I CANNOT LEAVE HER BEHIND!
YOU FOOL, WE CAN'T HELP HER! LET'S GO, BEFORE THEY CHANGE THEIR MINDS ABOUT OUR FREEDOM!

THERE WAS NO USE ARGUING WITH THE STRANGE MUMMY CHIEFTIAN, LES SPRANG QUICKLY TO HIS FEET AND...
IF THIS IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR POWER, IT IS NOW IN MY HANDS!
GUARDS, HO! STOP HIM! SEIZE THE ACCURSED DOG!
ONE MORE STEP TOWARD ME, AND THIS ARM WILL BE CONSUMED BY FIRE! CALL OFF YOUR MEN AND LET US DEPART!
HAIIREEE! WE ARE IN HIS POWER, WE MUST YIELD! ANYTHING! BUT RETURN MY SACRED ARM!
I PROMISE TO LEAVE THIS COFFER ON THE MOUNTAIN LEDGE WHERE MY CAMP IS LOCATED!
IF YOU DECEIVE ME, THERE WILL BE NO PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE YOU CAN HIDE!
LATER...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU PEOPLE? WE RECORDED THE WHOLE ECLIPSE, AND...
GOOD! DON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS NOW! THERE'S NO TIME! PACK THE EQUIPMENT AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
TWO MILES FROM THEIR ORIGINAL CAMP...
WHERE THE DEVIL IS OTTO?
HE DISAPPEARED RIGHT AFTER WE BROKE CAMP!
A SHORT WHILE LATER, IN TOWN!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHY-- THAT MUST BE THE COFFER WITH TATRA MAGIS' WITHERED ARM! I PROMISED TO LEAVE IT!
DO YOU THINK I'D LEAVE IT BEHIND? THE MUSEUM WILL PAY A KING'S RANSOM FOR THE WITHERED RELIC AND THE STORY BEHIND IT!
WEEKS LATER, BACK AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM, AS LES PREPARED TO DELIVER HIS REPORT...
THE ASTRONOMICAL REPORT CAN WAIT! THIS WITHERED ARM OF TATRA MAGIS AND THE STORY OF THE MUMMIES ARE TOO FASCINATING
GENTLEMEN, I'M PREPARE TO SACRIFICE THIS GREAT TREASURE FOR A CONSIDERATION!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, BETH! THE INCREDIBLE TATRA MAGIS AND HIS MUMMIES COME FIRST!
YES, MR. PREMER, THE MUSEUM IS EAGER TO PURCHASE THE RELIC! BUT FIRST WE MUST HAVE A CONFERENCE OF THE TRUSTEES!

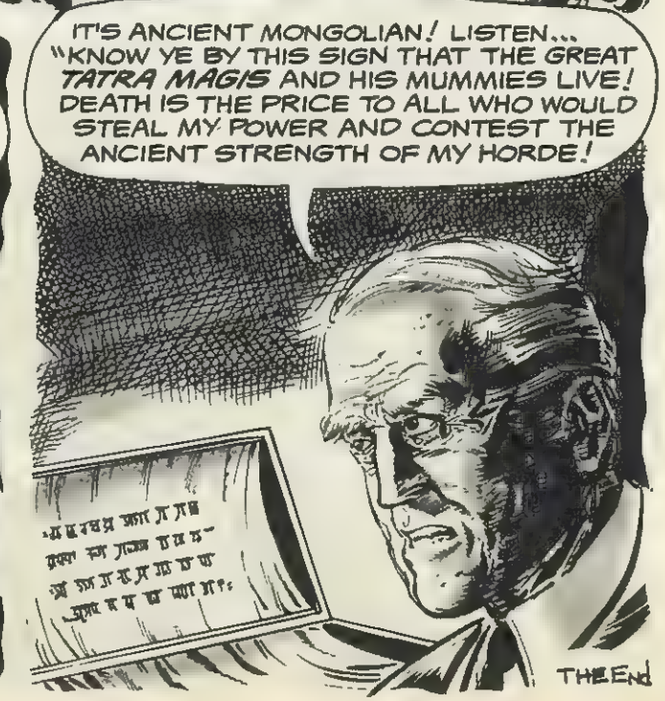

LATER IN THE CURATING ROOM OF THE MUSEUM...
HA! HA! THE WAY THEY CLUSTERED AROUND THE WITHERED ARM AND DISMISSED LES JARNELL... I WONDER HOW MUCH I'LL GET FOR IT?

SUDDENLY, OTTO'S BLOOD FROZE, AS HE TURNED...
TATRA MAGIS! YOU!
MY ARM! I HAVE COME TO RETRIEVE MY ARM, YOU THIEF!

NO! NO!
SEE HOW NICELY IT ATTACHES TO MY BODY?

NOW, I WILL TEST ITS STRENGTH ON YOUR THROAT!... DIE YOU DOG!
SPARE ME! ARGHHHH! AIEEEEE!

THE TERRIBLE SCREAMS BROUGHT THE MUSEUM OFFICIALS ON THE RUN...
HE'S DEAD WITH TERRIBLE CLAW MARKS AT HIS THROAT, AS IF A GIGANTIC BEAST HAD KILLED HIM!
THE WITHERED ARM IS GONE! AND LOOK AT THIS ANCIENT WRITING! IT'S WRITTEN IN BLOOD... FRESH BLOOD!


IT'S ANCIENT MONGOLIAN! LISTEN... "KNOW YE BY THIS SIGN THAT THE GREAT TATRA MAGIS AND HIS MUMMIES LIVE! DEATH IS THE PRICE TO ALL WHO WOULD STEAL MY POWER AND CONTEST THE ANCIENT STRENGTH OF MY HORDE!
THE END

THEIR BLIND EYES SOUGHT CHARLIE DEFFER BEHIND WALLS OF STONE! THEIR BONY WHITE FINGERS REACHED OUT TO ENSNARE HIM FOR THEIR...

GHOULS GRAVEYARD

THE DEAD HAVE COME FOR YOU, CHARLIE DEFFER!

GET AWAY! DON'T STARE AT ME THROUGH THOSE EMPTY EYE SOCKETS! Y-YOU'LL NEVER GET ME--NEVER!

Reynoso 69

The GRAVESTONES STOOD OUT LIKE LEERING YELLOW TEETH IN THE LIGHT OF THE LOW-HANGING MOON! SCRAWNY, ELFISH CHARLIE DEFFER--HIS SHIFTY EYES DARTING--ASCENDED THE NARROW, ROCK-STREWN ROAD THAT BORDERED THE CEMETERY!

THIS IS THE RACKET! NO MORE GOING HUNGRY FOR ME--OR SLEEPING ON HARD BENCHES! THOSE CORPSES ALWAYS GOT RINGS OR SOME STUFF ON 'EM I CAN SELL!

HE MUTTERED ALOUD, JUST TO HEAR A SOUND OVER THE STILLNESS OF DEATH!

THERE! THAT'S THE MOST IMPRESSIVE GRAVE! LOTS OF DOUGH WENT INTO ERECTING THAT! I'LL KNOW SOON!

Then...CROUCHING, HE BEGAN TO DIG FEVERISHLY! AN HOUR WENT BY! HE TREMBLED AND SWEATED PROFUSELY FROM THE EFFORT!
GOT TO WORK-- FASTER! SOMEBODY MIGHT HEAR ME DIGGING!
THE COFFIN! I'VE REACHED IT!
WITH TREMENDOUS FINGERS, HE PULLED BACK THE LID, AND HE SAW---
A RING! A SOLID GOLD RING!
UH--I-IT'S STARTING TO COME OFF! OH! I-IT MUST BE MY IMAGINATION! I-I THOUGHT THE HAND MOVED!
--I--I CAN'T GET THE RING OFF! --NO! IT CAN'T BE! THE HAND'S BECOME A FIST... SO I CAN'T REMOVE THE R---
OOOOHHHH
The RUSH OF COLD HORROR BLOTTED OUT CONSCIOUSNESS FOR ONLY MINUTES... WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES, HE LOOKED INTO THE WRINKLED, JAUNDICED FACE OF A MAN WITH A LANTERN!
UP, MAN-- UP, I SAY!

I-I CAN'T GET UP! I-I'M TOO WEAK TO RUN AWAY! IT'S BECAUSE I--I HAVEN'T EATEN IN TWO DAYS!

I AM THE CARETAKER! I SAW YOU WHILE I WAS DOING MY ROUNDS!
Y-YOU'LL HAVE ME ARRESTED--THROWN IN JAIL--NO!

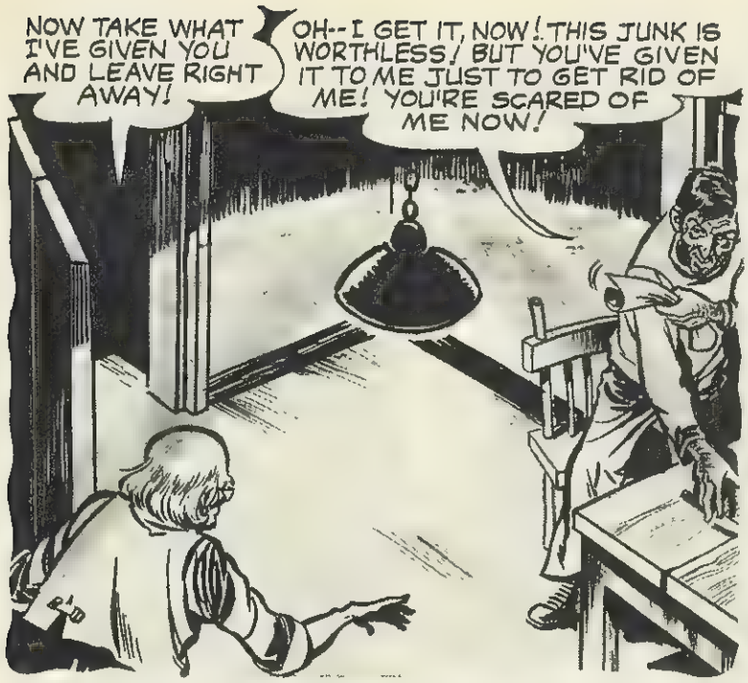
NEVER MIND THAT NOW! HERE--LET ME HELP YOU!

INSTEAD OF SUMMONING THE POLICE, THE ELDERLY MAN, EMIL GLOSSIK, LED HIM TO HIS COTTAGE AND MADE HIM SOME HOT SOUP AND TEA... AND AS HE WATCHED DEFFER WOLFISHLY CONSUMED IT...
ARE EARTHLY POSSESSIONS SO IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT YOU RESORT TO GHOULING, SCROUNGING THE GRAVES OF THE DEAD?

IT MEANS EVERYTHING! I WOULD LIE--STEAL--CHEAT--ANYTHING TO BE RICH!

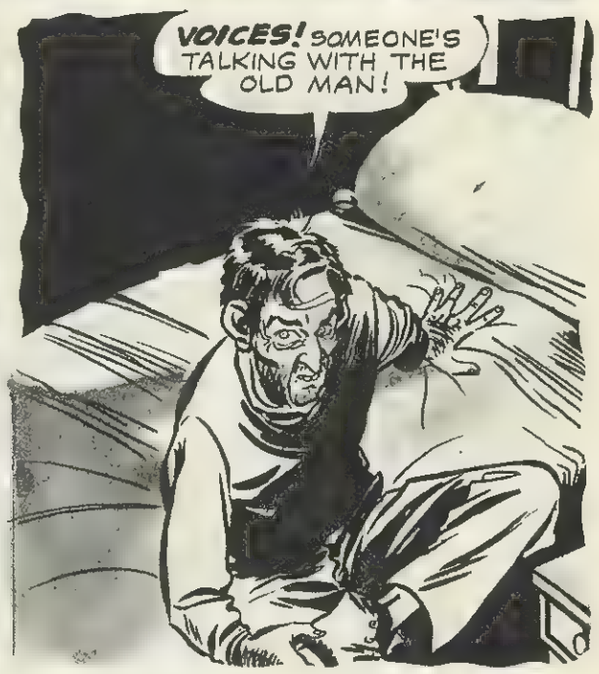
HERE--YOU MAY HAVE THIS! IT IS A KEY TO A STRONGBOX WITH CONSIDERABLE MONEY IN IT AND A DEED TO MY HOUSE!
I-I DON'T GET IT! WHY DO YOU GIVE THIS TO ME?

ONLY BECAUSE IT IS OF NO USE TO ME!
HE MUST BE NUTS! OR DOES HE HAVE SOME OTHER REASON FOR GIVING ME THIS STUFF?

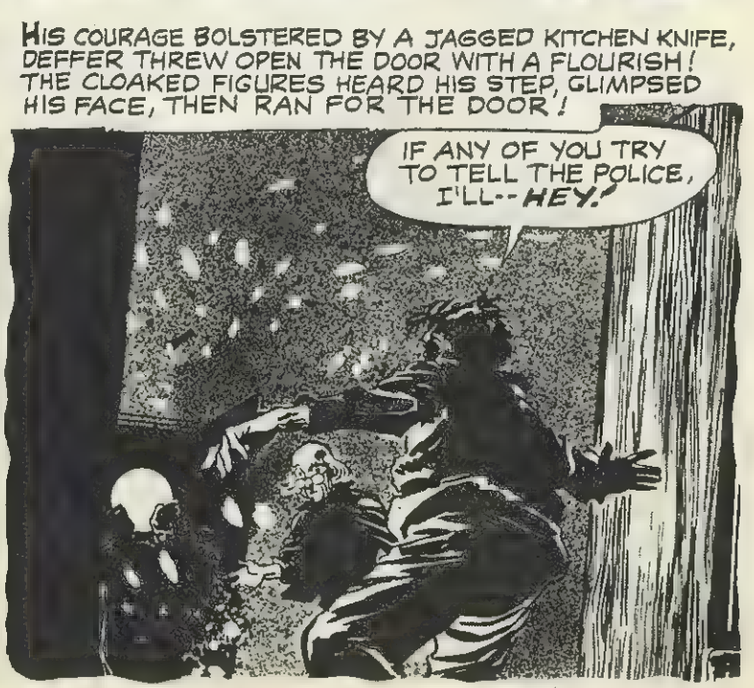

NOW TAKE WHAT I'VE GIVEN YOU AND LEAVE RIGHT AWAY!
OH--I GET IT, NOW! THIS JUNK IS WORTHLESS! BUT YOU'VE GIVEN IT TO ME JUST TO GET RID OF ME! YOU'RE SCARED OF ME NOW!

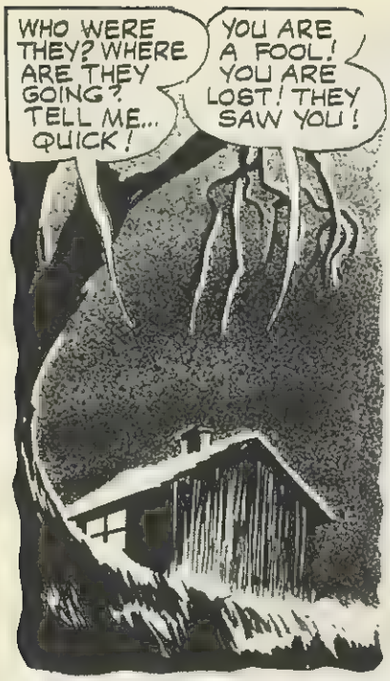
BUT I'M NOT LEAVING! I'M STICKING AROUND HERE FOR THE NIGHT--MAYBE EVEN FOR A FEW DAYS!

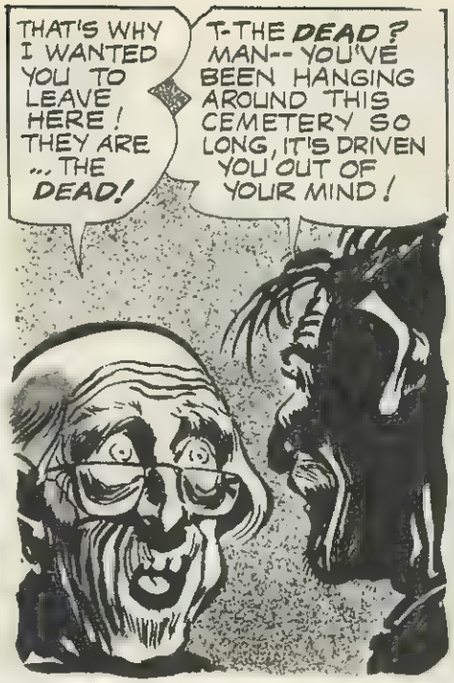
EMIL GLOSSIK SHRUGGED AS CHARLEY DEFFER PUSHED HIS WAY INTO ONE OF THE ROOMS... HE STRETCHED OUT ON THE BED--VERY PLEASED WITH HIMSELF...
THIS ISN'T A BAD SET-UP I'VE STUMBLED INTO! I NOTICED THERE'S NO TELEPHONE SO THE OLD GUY CAN'T CONTACT ANYBODY WITHOUT MY KNOWING!

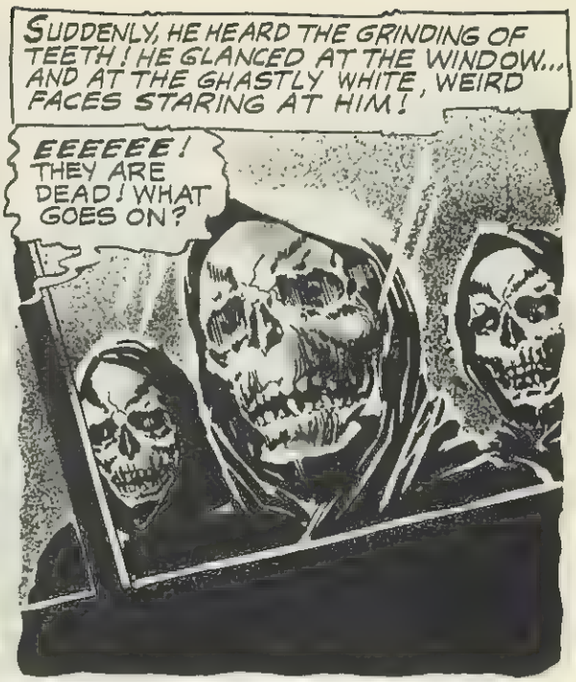

VOICES! SOMEONE'S TALKING WITH THE OLD MAN!

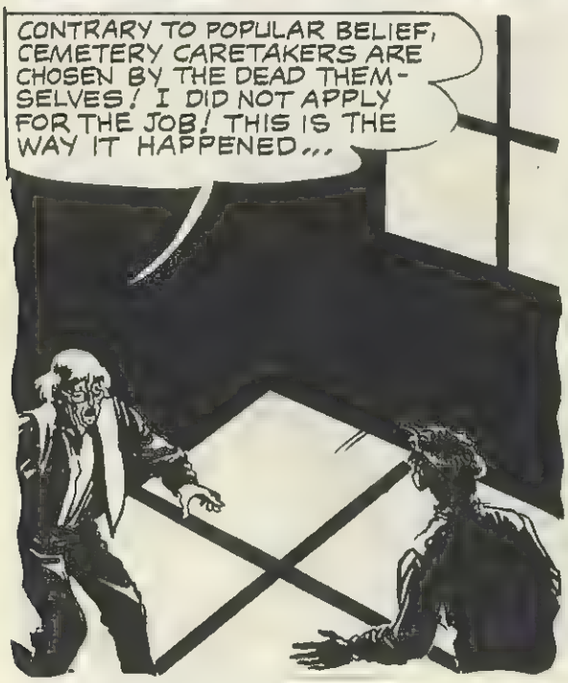
THE LIGHT'S SO DIM! LOOKS LIKE A LOT OF STRANGELY CLOAKED FIGURES! I'LL SEE THEY MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS!


HIS COURAGE BOLSTERED BY A JAGGED KITCHEN KNIFE, DEFFER THREW OPEN THE DOOR WITH A FLOURISH! THE CLOAKED FIGURES HEARD HIS STEP, GLIMPSED HIS FACE, THEN RAN FOR THE DOOR!
IF ANY OF YOU TRY TO TELL THE POLICE, I'LL--HEY!

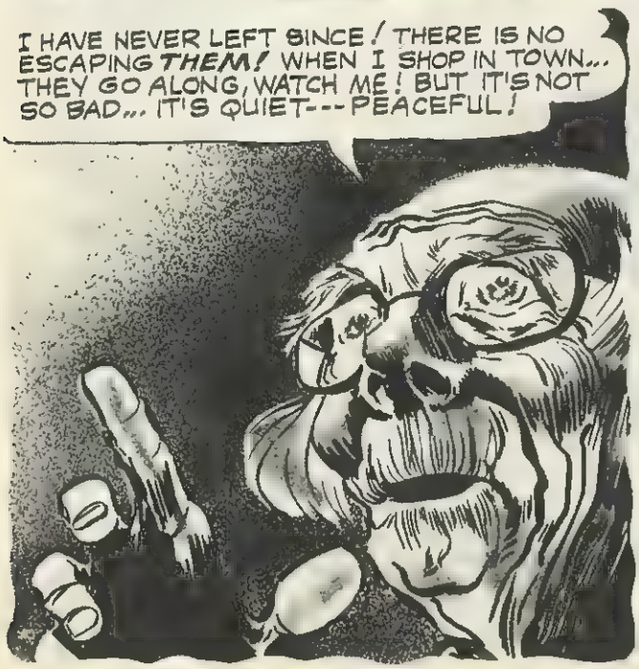

WHO WERE THEY? WHERE ARE THEY GOING? TELL ME... QUICK!
YOU ARE A FOOL! YOU ARE LOST! THEY SAW YOU!


THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU TO LEAVE HERE! THEY ARE ... THE DEAD!
T-THE DEAD? MAN-- YOU'VE BEEN HANGING AROUND THIS CEMETERY SO LONG, IT'S DRIVEN YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND!


SUDDENLY, HE HEARD THE GRINDING OF TEETH! HE GLANCED AT THE WINDOW... AND AT THE GHASTLY WHITE, WEIRD FACES STARING AT HIM!
EEEEEE! THEY ARE DEAD! WHAT GOES ON?


CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, CEMETERY CARETAKERS ARE CHOSEN BY THE DEAD THEMSELVES! I DID NOT APPLY FOR THE JOB! THIS IS THE WAY IT HAPPENED...

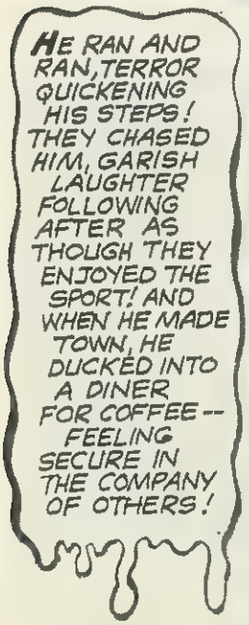
"A FRIEND OF MINE PASSED AWAY... AFTER HE WAS BURIED, I WOULD COME OFTEN TO HIS GRAVE! ONE RAINY EVENING..."
WE ARE A DELEGATION OF THE DEAD! WE HAVE ELECTED YOU TO BE OUR CARETAKER!
PAX


I HAVE NEVER LEFT SINCE! THERE IS NO ESCAPING THEM! WHEN I SHOP IN TOWN... THEY GO ALONG, WATCH ME! BUT IT'S NOT SO BAD... IT'S QUIET---PEACEFUL!

THAT'S WHY I GAVE YOU THE KEY AND THE DEED! BUT NOW... YOU ARE DOOMED!

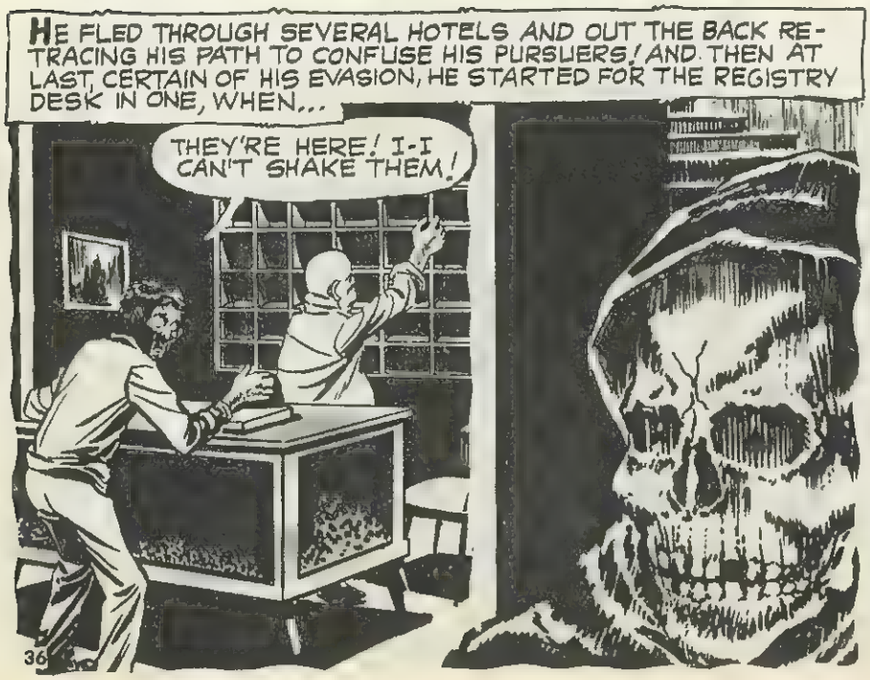
AT THAT INSTANT, THE DOOR OPENED, AND THE DEAD CAME STALKING IN TO STUDY QUIVERING CHARLEY!
AGGGGH!!

THEY WON'T KEEP ME HERE! THEY WON'T

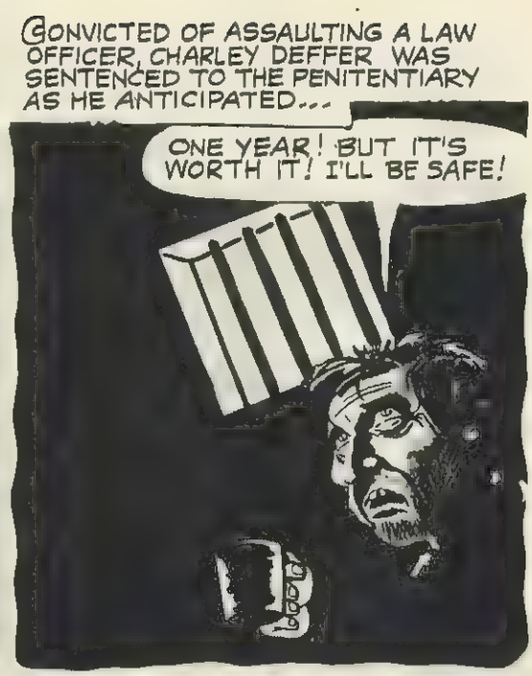

HE RAN AND RAN, TERROR QUICKENING HIS STEPS! THEY CHASED HIM, GARISH LAUGHTER FOLLOWING AFTER AS THOUGH THEY ENJOYED THE SPORT! AND WHEN HE MADE TOWN, HE DUCKED INTO A DINER FOR COFFEE -- FEELING SECURE IN THE COMPANY OF OTHERS!

THEN HE NOTICED--
T-THEY'RE WATCHING ME FROM THE WINDOW!
CRY

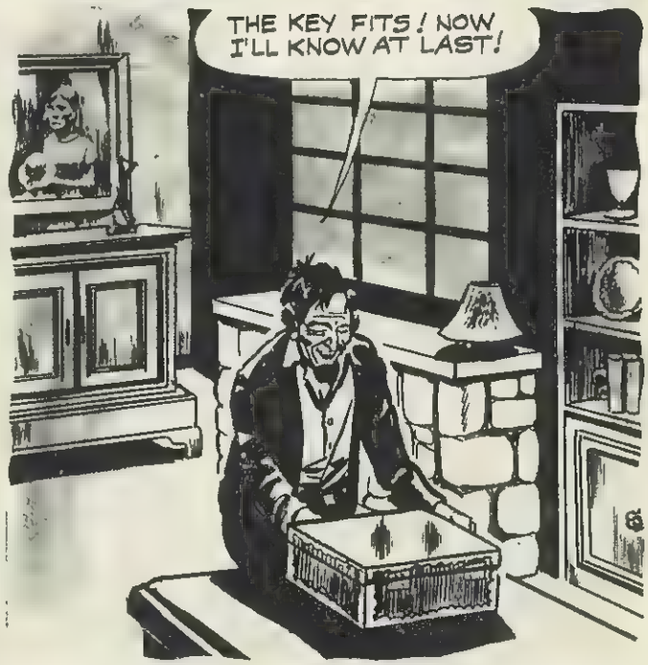
I-I'LL GO TO A HOTEL! LOCK MYSELF IN A ROOM WHERE THEY WON'T FIND ME!
LOOK AT HIM! HE GETS HIGH ON COFFEE!


HE FLED THROUGH SEVERAL HOTELS AND OUT THE BACK RE-TRACING HIS PATH TO CONFUSE HIS PURSUERS! AND THEN AT LAST, CERTAIN OF HIS EVASION, HE STARTED FOR THE REGISTRY DESK IN ONE, WHEN...
THEY'RE HERE! I-I CAN'T SHAKE THEM!

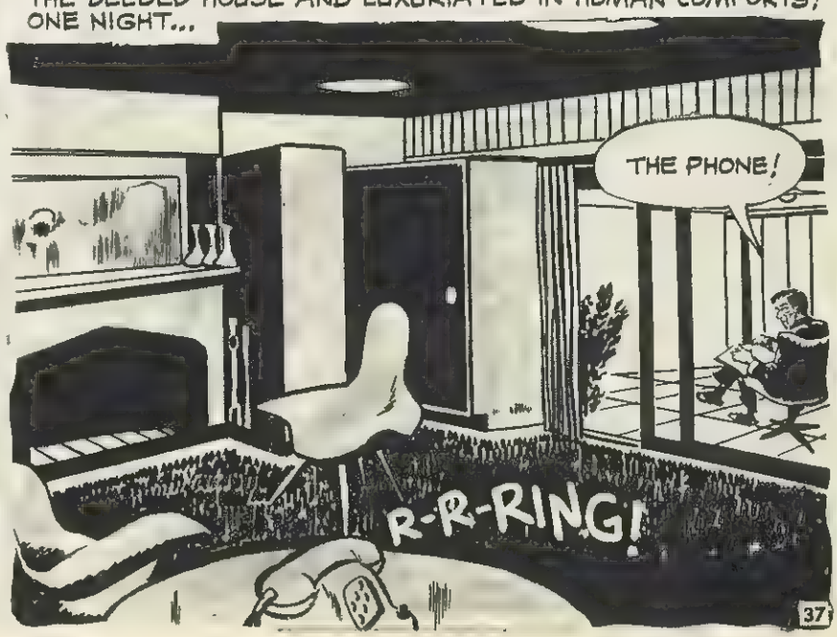
THERE MUST BE SOMEPLACE I CAN GO WHERE THEY CAN'T FOLLOW! OH-- YES, I KNOW! IT'S A DESPERATE MEASURE BUT I'VE GOT TO DO IT! THAT COP!

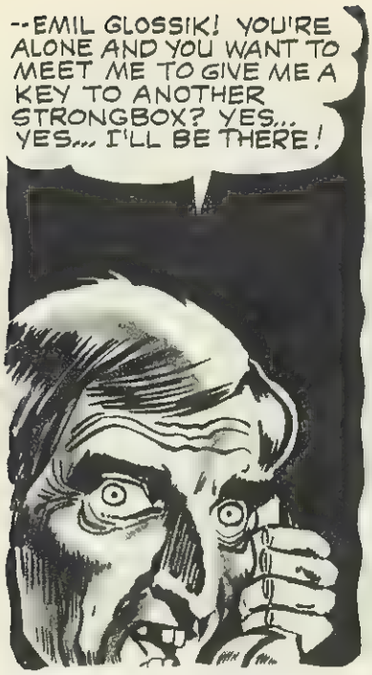


DEFFER COUNTED THE MINUTES OF EACH DAY--SUFFERING AN AGONY OF WAITING!--WAITING! HE SOUGHT EACH CORNER FOR THE GHASTLY DEAD SENTINELS... BUT THEY WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN! AT LAST HE WAS RELEASED! HE WENT TO THE DEEDED HOUSE AND UNCOVERED THE STRONGBOX!



WITH HIS NEWLY-FOUND RICHES, CHARLEY DEFFER RENOVATED THE DEEDED HOUSE AND LUXURIATED IN HUMAN COMFORTS! ONE NIGHT...



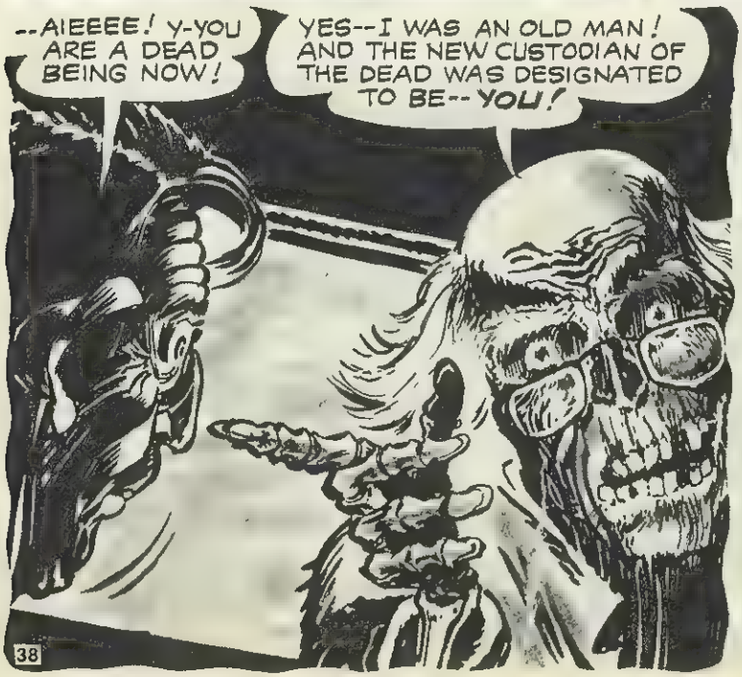

--EMIL GLOSSIK! YOU'RE ALONE AND YOU WANT TO MEET ME TO GIVE ME A KEY TO ANOTHER STRONGBOX? YES... YES... I'LL BE THERE!

HE'S ALONE! THAT MEANS HE'S ESCAPED, TOO! SO THE OLD GOAT'S STILL GIVING THINGS AWAY!

BUT CHARLEY DEFFER WAS WARY JUST THE SAME! AT THE APPOINTED TIME, HE WATCHED THE CAR FOR A LONG TIME BEFORE HE DETERMINED THAT GLOSSIK WAS ALONE!
-- GLOSSIK! I'M HERE! WHERE'S THE KEY?
COME IN, QUICKLY! WE'LL DRIVE AWAY FROM HERE TO BE CERTAIN WE HAVEN'T BEEN FOLLOWED!

HEY, WAIT! YOU'RE HEADED TOWARD THE CEMETERY!

STOP! STOP! W-WHY CAN'T I SQUEEZE YOUR THROAT WITH MY HANDS? STOP!!
IT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD!


--AIEEEE! Y-YOU ARE A DEAD BEING NOW!
YES--I WAS AN OLD MAN! AND THE NEW CUSTODIAN OF THE DEAD WAS DESIGNATED TO BE--YOU!

--AND SO IT WAS, THAT CHARLEY DEFFER FOUND HIS NICHE! HE WOULD RUMMAGE IN THE WORLD OF THE DEAD... A GHOUL TRAPPED BY HIS OWN AVARICE!
THE END

HIS WAS THE MOST HORRIBLE DILEMMA OF ALL TIME! TWO WOMEN LOVED HIM, FOUGHT FOR HIM, SWORE NEVER TO LEAVE HIM! SOME MEN MIGHT HAVE ENVIED HIM—UNTIL THEY KNEW THE WHOLE TERRIBLE TRUTH! BECAUSE ONE OF THE WOMEN WAS DEAD...

FEAR of the WITCH

SO FARSON DESCENDS INTO THE BLACK PIT OF GRIEF... FILLED WITH SELF-ACCUSATION AND LONELINESS.
I FEEL SO— EMPTY! I DON'T WANT TO GO ON LIVING WITHOUT BETH! IT WAS MY FAULT! I...
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, DICK! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! AND TIME WILL DULL THE PAIN!
AND FOR MONTHS...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! BETH SAID SHE WOULD COME BACK TO ME! BUT I'VE WAITED FOR MONTHS! EVERY NIGHT, ALONE, AND THERE'S NO SIGN! NOTHING!
UNTIL FINALLY...
MY FRIENDS WERE RIGHT! TIME HAS HELPED! I'LL NEVER FORGET BETH, BUT NOW I'M SURE SHE ISN'T COMING BACK! IT'S TIME I BEGAN TO LIVE AGAIN!
UNTIL, IN THE NATURAL COURSE OF THINGS...
H-HELLO!
I SEE YOU DON'T NEED ME ANY LONGER! HAVE FUN!
THANKS, WE WILL! AND THANKS AGAIN FOR INTRODUCING ME TO THIS BEAUTIFUL GIRL! JANET! A NICE NAME!
LOVE COMES AGAIN AND HE MARRIES JANET PAXTON...
BUSY LITTLE BEAVER, AREN'T YOU? YOU'VE BEEN TOSSING OUT MY BACHELOR POSSESSIONS FOR A WEEK NOW!
HMMM— THEY NEEDED TOSSING OUT! AND WHAT IS THIS?
WHO IS SHE? YOU NEVER TOLD ME...
THAT PICTURE? OH, IT'S SOMEONE I USED TO KNOW! I— I DON'T WANT IT ANY LONGER!

A FEW MINUTES LATER IT BEGINS...
HERE'S YOUR HOT MILK, JANET! JANET! WHAT'S WRONG?
AAAAAAA— PAIN—AWFUL!
AA!!!!!!!!!!!!—

Y!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!—
SOMETHING— HURTING! OOOOO— HORRIBLE! FEEL LIKE I—DYING!
EEEEEEEEE—

BEFORE HIS TERROR-STRICKEN EYES HE SEES THE CHANGE...
GREAT HEAVENS! BETH! IT'S Y-YOU! YOU'VE COME BACK! YOU'VE TAKEN JANET'S BODY!
N-NOT YET! BUT SOON! I—HAH-HAH— TOLD YOU I'D COME BACK, DARLING!

AND THERE IS—BETH...
I—I DON'T BELIEVE IT YET! HOW COULD YOU?
IT WAS HARD! TERRIBLY HARD! I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR MONTHS! IT'S SO— (SHUDDER) COLD AND DAMP OUT THERE!

YOU KNOW I DETEST HOT MILK, SWEETHEART! I ALWAYS HAD A CUP OF TEA BEFORE BED! PLEASE?
HUH! OH, YES! TEA! OF COURSE— BETH! I—I'LL GET IT RIGHT AWAY!

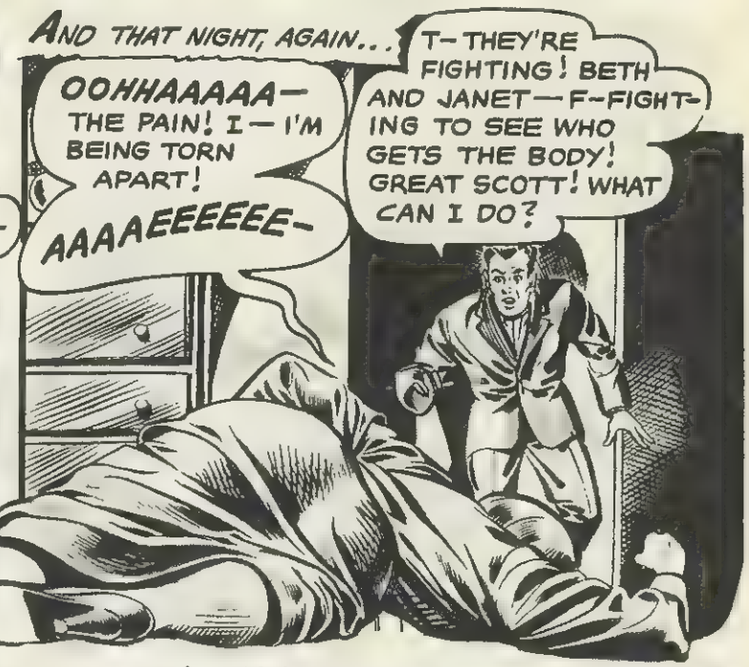
AND AFTERWARD...
GREAT SCOTT! IT'S REALLY BETH! BUT WHERE IS JANET, THEN? AND WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? WHAT CAN I TELL PEOPLE? WHO WOULD BELIEVE ME IF I TOLD THE TRUTH?

SO ALL THAT LONG AND LONELY NIGHT...
I'LL GO MAD! ALL MY FRIENDS KNEW BETH—AND JANET! THEY THINK BETH IS DEAD! AND NOW— NOW THEY MIGHT EVEN THINK I'VE MURDERED JANET! I'VE SIMPLY GOT TO KEEP HER OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL I CAN THINK OF A WAY...

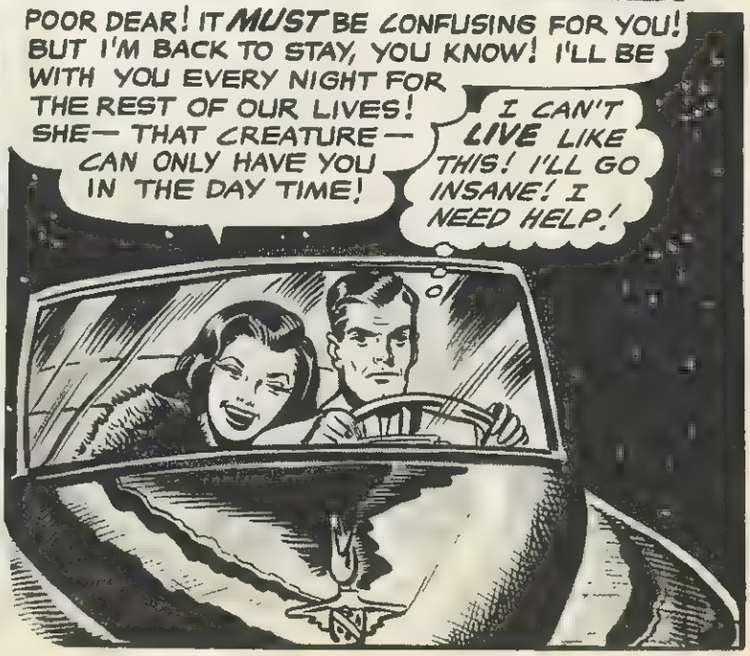
BUT NEXT MORNING...
GOOD MORNING, DARLING! BE AN ANGEL AND BRING ME SOME HOT MILK!
HOT MILK! BUT—JANET! JANET, DARLING, YOU...

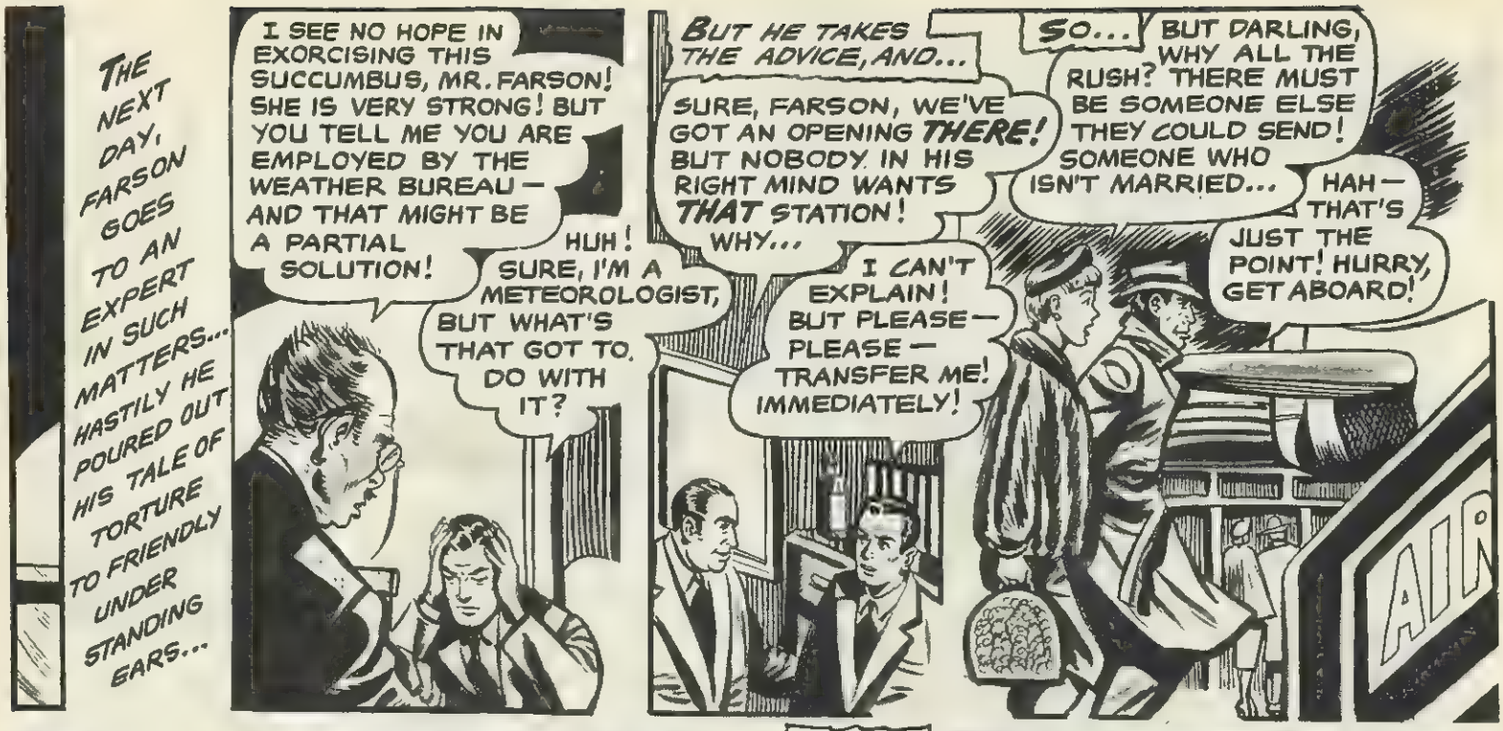
WHO DID YOU EXPECT, SWEETHEART? IS ANYTHING WRONG? YOU LOOK SO STRANGE!
N—NO! THAT IS, I—NO, EVERYTHING IS FINE! I'LL GET YOUR MILK!

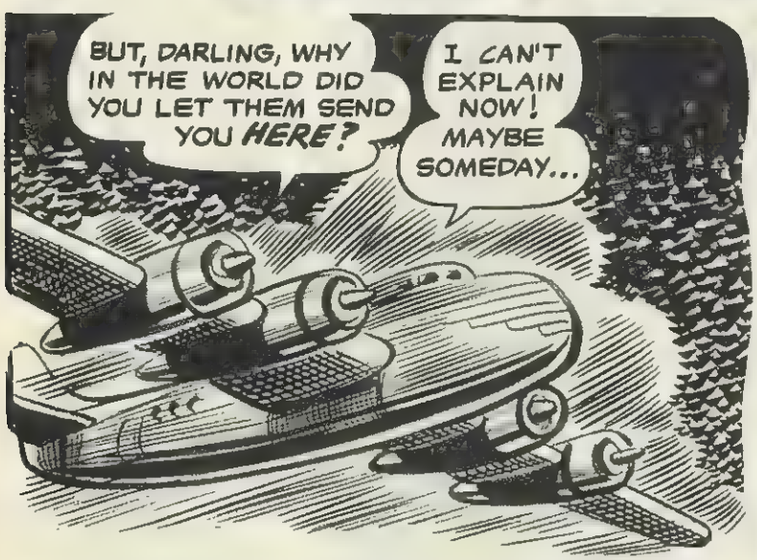
I HAD THE FUNNIEST DREAM, DICK! SORT OF SCARY! SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO STEAL MY BODY!
YES, FUNNY! HAH-HAH!
SO THAT'S IT! BETH CAN ONLY APPEAR AT NIGHT! AND JANET DOESN'T KNOW!

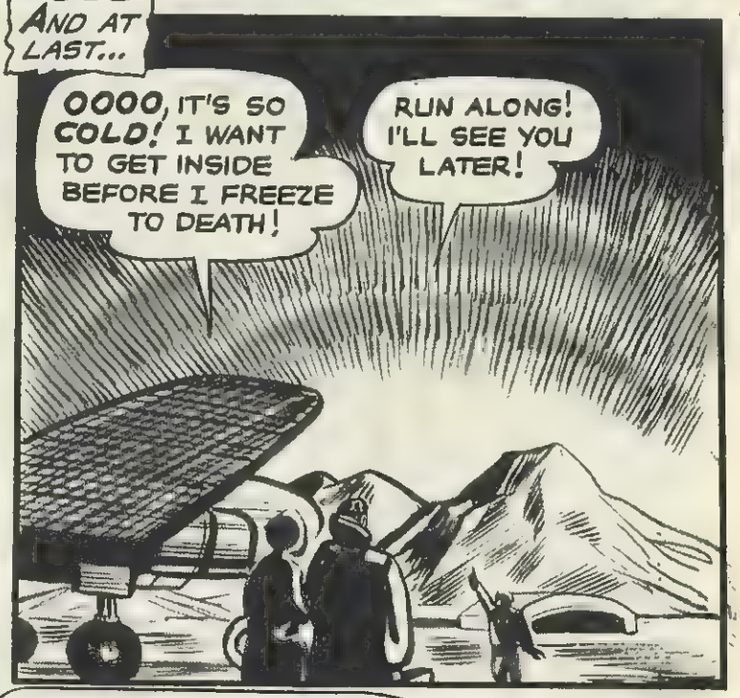

AND THAT NIGHT, AGAIN...
OOHHAAAAA— THE PAIN! I—I'M BEING TORN APART!
AAAAEEEEEE-
T-THEY'RE FIGHTING! BETH AND JANET—F-FIGHTING TO SEE WHO GETS THE BODY! GREAT SCOTT! WHAT CAN I DO?

BUT IN THE DARKNESS, THE SPIRIT OF BETH IS THE STRONGER.
HURRY AND GET DRESSED, DARLING! YOU KNOW I LIKE TO GO DANCING! HURRY, NOW! WE'LL HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME!
Y-YES—BETH!


POOR DEAR! IT MUST BE CONFUSING FOR YOU! BUT I'M BACK TO STAY, YOU KNOW! I'LL BE WITH YOU EVERY NIGHT FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES! SHE—THAT CREATURE—CAN ONLY HAVE YOU IN THE DAY TIME!
I CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS! I'LL GO INSANE! I NEED HELP!







SO WE LEAVE RICHARD FARSON, SURELY THE STRANGEST BIGAMIST OF ALL TIME... A VICTIM OF TWO LOVES, TWO WOMEN... ONE OF THEM DEAD.

The End

EERIE BONES

WHO KNEW WHAT TERROR LAY HIDDEN IN THE STEAMING GREEN HELL OF THE JUNGLE! RUMORS, WHISPERS OF FEARFUL THINGS, CAME OUT OF THE DREAD INTERIOR WHERE NO WHITE MAN HAD EVER TROD BEFORE! THEN INTO THE PRESENT, OUT OF THE CENTURIES, CAME THE HORRIBLE FORMLESS DEATH — THE BONES OF BALFUR...

SOMEWHERE IN THE HEAT RIDDEN JUNGLES OF BURMA A PARTY OF SCIENTISTS ARE ON THE VERGE OF A GREAT DISCOVERY...

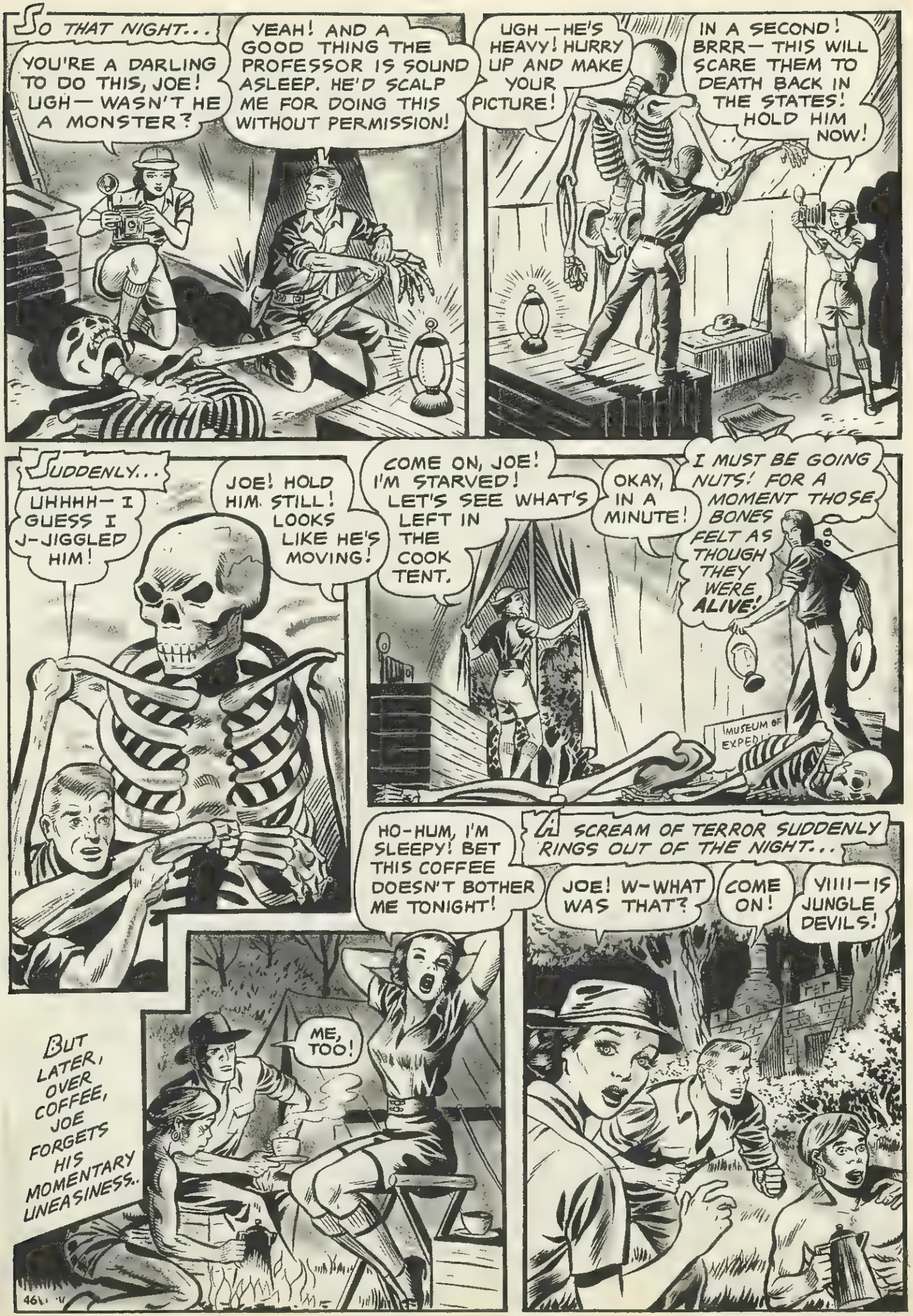
WELL, JOE, LOOKS LIKE WE'LL KNOW SOON NOW!

HOPE WE'RE RIGHT, PROFESSOR SMYTHE!

I'LL GET TO USE THIS CAMERA AT LAST!

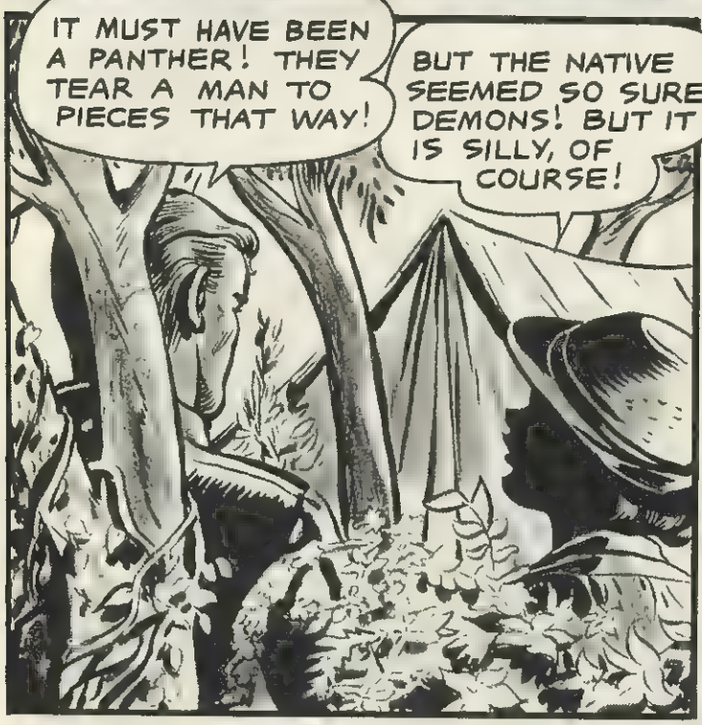
YES, KATY! IT WAS A RACE OF GIANTS WHO BUILT THE TEMPLES OF BALFUR HALF A MILLION YEARS AGO, YOU'LL HAVE THE SCOOP OF THE CENTURY! BUT SO FAR WE'VE FOUND ONLY FRAGMENTS!

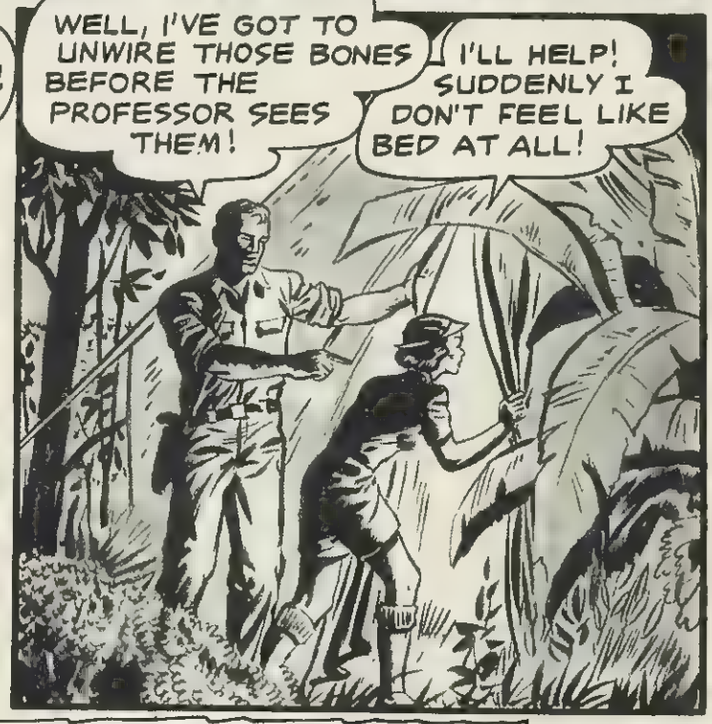
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
TUAN! COME QUICKLY! WE FIND SOMETHING!
AYEEEEEE— IS BONES OF MAN THING!
AND...
LOOK AT THAT! A GIANT, ALL RIGHT! IN THE TRADITIONAL BURIAL POSTURE OF THE BALFURITES! WE'VE DONE IT!
EASY, NOW! EASY! DON'T CRUMBLE THE BONES!
OLD PROFESSOR SMYTHE IS IN HIS GLORY!
I DON'T BLAME HIM! MY SHOTS OF THOSE BONES ARE GOING TO MAKE MAGAZINE HISTORY!
THIS PROVES THAT I WAS RIGHT ALL ALONG! THERE WAS A RACE OF GIANTS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD! LONG BEFORE RECORDED TIME!
BUT...
HMMM— THIS ISN'T SO GOOD! I NEED SOMETHING WITH A LITTLE ZING FOR THE FOLKS WHO READ OUR MAG!
WOMEN! NEVER SATISFIED!
JOE, DARLING! YOU WOULDN'T DO A GIRL A GREAT BIG FAVOR, WOULD YOU?
HUH! I DON'T LIKE THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES, BUT WHAT IS IT?


SO THAT NIGHT...
YOU'RE A DARLING TO DO THIS, JOE! UGH— WASN'T HE A MONSTER?
YEAH! AND A GOOD THING THE PROFESSOR IS SOUND ASLEEP. HE'D SCALP ME FOR DOING THIS WITHOUT PERMISSION!
UGH —HE'S HEAVY! HURRY UP AND MAKE YOUR PICTURE!
IN A SECOND! BRRR— THIS WILL SCARE THEM TO DEATH BACK IN THE STATES! HOLD HIM NOW!
SUDDENLY...
UHHHH— I GUESS I J-JIGGLED HIM!
JOE! HOLD HIM STILL! LOOKS LIKE HE'S MOVING!
COME ON, JOE! I'M STARVED! LET'S SEE WHAT'S LEFT IN THE COOK TENT.
OKAY, IN A MINUTE!
I MUST BE GOING NUTS! FOR A MOMENT THOSE BONES FELT AS THOUGH THEY WERE ALIVE!
MUSEUM OF EXPED
HO-HUM, I'M SLEEPY! BET THIS COFFEE DOESN'T BOTHER ME TONIGHT!
A SCREAM OF TERROR SUDDENLY RINGS OUT OF THE NIGHT...
JOE! W-WHAT WAS THAT?
COME ON!
YIIII— IS JUNGLE DEVILS!
ME, TOO!
BUT LATER, OVER COFFEE, JOE FORGETS HIS MOMENTARY UNEASINESS..

A MOMENT LATER...
OHH—IT'S HORRIBLE! WHAT DID IT?
SOME SORT OF JUNGLE BEAST, I SUPPOSE!

NO, TUAN! NO ANIMAL DO THIS! IS DEMON FROM JUNGLE!
DEMON! NONSENSE!


IT MUST HAVE BEEN A PANTHER! THEY TEAR A MAN TO PIECES THAT WAY!
BUT THE NATIVE SEEMED SO SURE! DEMONS! BUT IT IS SILLY, OF COURSE!


WELL, I'VE GOT TO UNWIRE THOSE BONES BEFORE THE PROFESSOR SEES THEM!
I'LL HELP! SUDDENLY I DON'T FEEL LIKE BED AT ALL!

J—JOE! THE BONES! THEY'RE GONE!

EVEN AS REALIZATION DAWNS ON THEM...
ANOTHER SCREAM! OH, JOE, I'M SO FRIGHTENED!
THAT ONE CAME FROM THE PROFESSOR'S TENT!

IT'S GOT THE PROFESSOR, WHATEVER IT IS!
THE B-BONES! DO YOU THINK— IS IT POSSIBLE?
EEEEEE-

AND THEN OUT OF THE SHADOWS COMES A HORROR TO CURDLE THE BLOOD AND WRECK THE MINDS OF MERE MEN...
OHHHHH—
THE B-BONES! THEY ARE ALIVE!

ARRRRRGRRGG—
GOING TO T-THROW THE BODY AT US!
BULLETS ARE NO GOOD AGAINST THAT THING!

AHHHHHH—
RUN, KATY! RUN!

UGHHH—

EEEEEE—
ARGGGGRRRR-

ARRRRRGGGG-
AHHHH- EEEEE- NO-

AYEEEE- DEVIL THING TAKE YOUNG MISSY INTO JUNGLE!

MINUTES LATER AS JOE RECOVERS HIS SENSES...
QUICK, TUAN! YOU HELP YOUNG MISSY! DEVIL HAVE HER!
K-KATY! THAT THING TOOK HER?

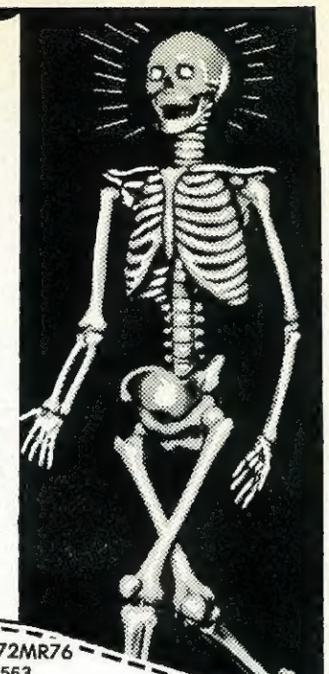
COME ON! WE'LL FIND HER! MOYA, GET ME THE ELEPHANT GUN FROM THE CHEST!
WE AFRAID, TUAN!
ME NOT GO INTO JUNGLE! TUAN MUST GO ALONE!

SO...
ALL RIGHT, YOU COWARDS! I'LL FIND KATY ALONE!
YOU BE KILLED SURE, TUAN!

THERE'S ITS FOOTPRINT! NOW IF I CAN FIND IT IN TIME, BEFORE IT KILLS KATY

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

MONSTER S-I-Z-E MONSTERS



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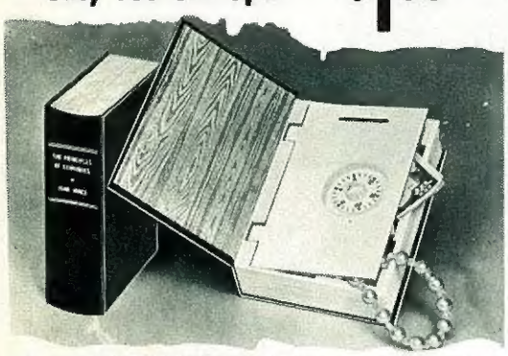

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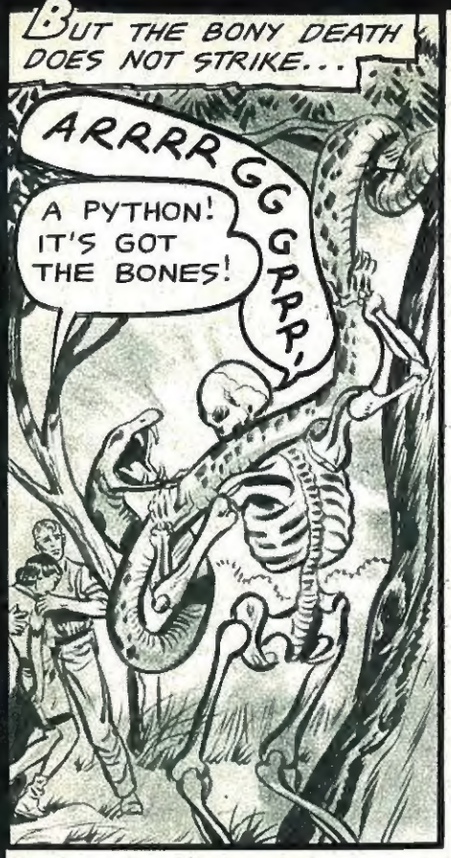
BUT THE BONY DEATH DOES NOT STRIKE...
ARRRR GG GRRR,
A PYTHON! IT'S GOT THE BONES!

JOE WATCHES A STRANGE AND TERRIBLE STRUGGLE...
USING ITS OWN BONES TO FIGHT THE S-SNAKE!

AS ITS BONES CRACK AND FLY APART THE CREATURE ROARS A LAST DEFIANCE...
ARGRRRRRGG—
THE SNAKE WON! SMASHED THE BRUTE INTO BITS!

AS THOUGH SATISFIED WITH ITS DEADLY WORK, THE PYTHON DOES NOT ATTACK THE TWO HUMANS...
OH, JOE! H-HOW HORRIBLE! I HOPED I WAS ONLY DREAMING!
IT WAS NO DREAM, BABY! BUT IT'S OVER. WE'RE SAFE!

I'M GOING TO BURY THAT THING AGAIN! EACH BONE IN A SEPARATE GRAVE, MILES APART! I DON'T KNOW ITS SECRET— AND NEITHER WILL ANYBODY ELSE, EVER!
THE END